

Telangana’s drought concerns bring Kaleshwaram scheme back into focus

Hyderabad: Telangana’s struggle to protect crops and secure drinking water amid deficit rainfall due to El Nino conditions has brought the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme back into focus. Conceived to capture Godavari River water and move it across drought-prone regions, the project could have provided the State with a crucial buffer against erratic monsoons and prolonged dry spells if its pumping, storage and distribution network had been fully operational.The project’s central advantage was not merely the volume of water it could lift, but its ability to store it across a network of reservoirs and well-connected water bodies, including a chain of minor irrigation tanks, making it available beyond the monsoon.

RRR Southern part project handed over to HGCL

Hyderabad: Amidst the controversy surrounding the alleged irregularities in Radial Road 2 tenders floated by Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL), the State government has now entrusted the Southern part of Regional Ring Road (RRR) to HGCL.

Congress MLA from Munugode Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy had charged irregularities in tenders and accused that they were being offered to Andhra based companies. He even said there was a loss of Rs.600 crore to the State exchequer in the tenders.

In this backdrop, the State government’s decision to entrust the RRR’s Southern part of HGCL, is triggering apprehensions.

Dasara return rush brings traffic to a crawl on Hyderabad roads

Hyderabad: Traffic congestion was reported on major highways leading to the city and other arterial roads in parts of the city on Thursday as people who had travelled to their native places for the Dasara vacation started returning ahead of the reopening of educational institutions.

The Vijayawada–Hyderabad National Highway witnessed slow-moving traffic, with vehicles queuing up from Mangalpally towards the Outer Ring Road (ORR) since the early hours of the day.

Heavy traffic was also reported on the Nagpur, Mumbai and Warangal highways as commuters returned from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana districts, including Medak, Siddipet and Sangareddy.

PM Modi, Polish counterpart Tusk discuss new avenues of cooperation in defence, AI, critical minerals

New Delhi, Oct 22 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk discussed new avenues of cooperation in sectors like critical minerals, defence, green technologies, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) at their meeting at the Hyderabad House here on Thursday

The two leaders agreed to work together to double the bilateral trade by 2030 and underscored the importance of the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

During the meeting, PMs Modi and Tusk also discussed regional and global developments.

Sharing details regarding the meeting, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said: "A new phase in the India–Poland Strategic Partnership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland held wide-ranging talks today. Building on the Strategic Partnership established in 2024, the leaders explored new avenues of cooperation in areas including AI, green technologies, critical minerals, and defence, while further deepening ties in trade, investment, education, culture and people-to-people exchanges."

"Both leaders agreed to work together to double the bilateral trade by 2030. The leaders underscored the importance of India–EU FTA which is set

to unlock new opportunities for businesses and industries, giving fresh impetus to economic engagement. The two leaders also exchanged views on regional and global developments, reaffirming their commitment to a rules-based international order and reform of global institutions, including the UN Security Council," it said in a statement on X.

Earlier in the day, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar called on PM Tusk and discussed cooperation between the two countries across various sectors.

"Pleased to call on Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland. Appreciated his sharing thoughts on deepening India - Poland cooperation across a wide range of domains," he said in a post on X.

Tusk arrived in New Delhi on Wednesday evening for a three-day official visit to India aimed at bolstering bilateral cooperation across defence, trade, and strategic sectors.

He was received by Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries and Jal Shakti, Raj Bhushan Choudhary, at the airport.



Hyderabad, Oct 22 (IANS) Telangana Chief Minister, A. Revanth Reddy, said on Thursday that the next general elections are crucial for the country and the people’s full support to Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, is the need of the hour for all.

Participating in the Pandaga Sayanna Mudiraj birth anniversary celebrations, Chief Minister Reddy urged all to stand in support of LoP Gandhi at the crucial juncture.

He expressed confidence that the majority ‘Bahujans’ would be empowered only when LoP Gandhi became Prime Minister.

Stating that the ‘People’s Government’ is according top priority to the political empowerment of all backward caste communities, CM Revanth Reddy announced that

will discuss this issue in the next Cabinet meeting and form a Cabinet Sub-Committee to conduct a comprehensive study on this issue,” he said.

CM Reddy noted that the misconceptions and doubts raised by other castes regarding Mudiraj in BC - A category also need to be addressed.

CM Reddy highlighted the BC Census conducted by his government and added that the census data helped every community to raise their voice with greater strength.

"All the communities have been requested to furnish full details to rectify the errors if their population count is not correctly mentioned in the Census," he asserted.

a Cabinet Sub-Committee would be constituted to study the inclusion of the Mudiraj community in BC-A category.

"Due to lack of accurate data, the Mudiraj community could not be reclassified from the 'BC-D' category to 'BC-A'. We will dis-

Next general elections crucial for country, says Telangana CM Revanth Reddy

The Chief Minister noted that Mudiraj community constitutes the largest population in his Kodangal constituency and the community is known for their trustworthiness.

He recalled that after becoming the Pradesh Congress Committee President, he had appointed Srihari Mudiraj as the District Congress Committee President. He was also given a ticket in the Assembly election and was also made a minister. Neelam Madhu was also given a party ticket to contest in the Lok Sabha elections.

CM Reddy suggested to minister Ponnampallabharathi to bring to the attention of TPCC President Mahesh Goud to provide an MLC ticket to the Mudiraj community.

He listed out welfare schemes launched for all communities and poorer sections. "While NTR launched rice distribution at two rupees per kilogram, the Congress government is now providing fine quality rice to 3.48 crore people," CM Reddy said.

CM Reddy stated that the welfare schemes launched by former chief ministers NTR, Chandrababu Naidu, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and KCR were being continued by his government.

"We have continued the welfare initiatives under-

taken by the previous government and building 'Indiramma' houses in every village," he said.

CM Reddy remembered the services of popular Telangana fighters Chakali Ailamma, Doddi Komuriah, and Pandaga Sayanna and said that the statues of Sayanna and Doddi Komuriah would be installed on the Tank Bund soon. The CM also recalled Gaddar, and Ande Sri's dedication to the service of society.

The Chief Minister praised Sayanna's fighting spirit who stood against landlords when they attempted to seize his land. "During the Nizam's rule, feudal lords encroached upon the lands of the poor. It was Sayanna who stood in support of the marginalized and also formed a group against the feudals," he said.

Sayanna is also credited with providing financial assistance for the marriages of daughters from poor families. When Sayanna was arrested by the Nizam's police, the then-Maharani of Wanaparthy paid a substantial sum to secure his release. Sayanna was murdered and even a century after his death, his songs can still be heard today during the sowing and harvesting seasons, the CM said.

Owaisi urges Centre to bring back stranded pilgrims from Saudi Arabia

Hyderabad, Oct 22 (IANS) AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi on Thursday urged the Centre to grant permission to airlines to operate flights to bring back stranded Indian pilgrims in Saudi Arabia.

The Hyderabad MP posted on X that 4,000 pilgrims from India are stuck in Makkah and Madina. He said they had flown via IndiGo, Akasa Air, and Air India but are now stuck there since these airlines have cancelled their flights.

Owaisi said the Director General of Civil Aviation must give these airlines permission to run flights in larger aircraft so that these stranded pilgrims can return to India. If not, specified flights must be arranged to bring them back, he said.

The MP stated that the Indian pilgrims have been abandoned by their travel agents. "This needs your urgent intervention; in the meanwhile, necessary support must be provided to the stranded pilgrims," said Owaisi, who tagged Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju, Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar, Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu, and Foreign Secre-



tary Vikram Misri in his post.

Umrah pilgrims from India are stranded in Saudi Arabia due to the cancellation of flights following attacks by Yemen's Houthis rebels on airports in the kingdom.

A pilgrim from Hyderabad was among 13 killed, and more than 300, including 11 Indians, were injured in the missile attack on King Khalid International Airport, Riyadh, on October 11.

Mohammed Yousuf Ali, 46, a techie from Hyderabad, was killed and his two sons were injured.

Yousuf Ali, employed in Riyadh for the last 10 years, had called his wife, three children, and an aunt to Saudi Arabia for Umrah.

BRS appoints constituency in-charges for two MLC elections

Hyderabad: The BRS has appointed constituency-wise in-charges across six districts to coordinate its preparations for the two upcoming MLC elections to the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduate constituencies in Telangana. The appointments aim to strengthen coordination at the constituency level and mobilise party workers ahead of the elections.

Party working president KT Rama Rao announced the appointments after a review meeting at Telangana Bhavan on Thursday. The in-charges have been tasked with coordinating with local party leaders and cadres and overseeing election-related activities in their respective constituencies.

In erstwhile Ranga Reddy district, the appointments include Ragidi Lakshma Reddy (Medchal), MLC K Naveen Rao (Quthbullapur), former Council Chairman K Swamy Goud (Ibrahimpattanam), MLC Vani Devi (Maheswaram), Ravula Sridhar Reddy (Rajendranagar), MLC Shambipur Raju (Serilingampally) and Gattu Ramchandhar Rao, among others.



Telangana plans one-time settlement scheme for industrial power dues

Hyderabad: The Congress government in Telangana will soon roll out a One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme to help closed industries clear their pending electricity dues, enabling power distribution companies to recover long-pending arrears amid growing fiscal challenges. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka directed officials to prepare proposals for the scheme.

During a review meeting at the Secretariat on Thursday, Bhatti Vikramarka asked the chairpersons and managing directors of TGSPDCL and TGNPDCL to coordinate with the managements of closed industries and explain the applicable rules and settlement options. He also directed the Finance department to initiate steps to recover outstanding dues owed to Singareni Collieries Company Limited, GENCO, TRANSCO and other power sector organisations by various government departments.

The meeting also focused on preparations to prevent power shortages during the Rabi season and summer, amid the possibility of reduced hydel generation due to El Niño and rising electricity demand. Bhatti Vikramarka set a target

of increasing daily thermal power generation to 140 million units.

Officials said average daily thermal generation reached 90.97 million units in the current financial year as of October 21, against 76.46 million units in 2025-26. Generation touched 118 million units on October 16.

To strengthen coal supplies to two units at the Yadadri Thermal Power Plant, an alternative arrangement with Coal India Limited has been made, with supplies expected to begin in November. Four 800-MW units at Yadadri are already generating power. The fifth unit was synchronised with the grid on October 20, and efforts are under way to resolve the remaining technical and operational issues before commercial operation.

The Deputy Chief Minister directed officials to run all thermal units at maximum capacity, improve plant load factors and monitor generation continuously. He stressed coordination among departments to ensure an uninterrupted supply of quality power to consumers.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Europe's autumn of unrest

Across Europe, particularly in France, there is a clear pattern of economic anxiety turning into a mass upsurge that is fast spinning out of control. France is at the epicentre of the most widespread social unrest seen in decades. What began in late September as localised blockades by high school students in the Paris region over crumbling infrastructure and teacher shortages soon snowballed into a national crisis. Public resentment over rising cost of living, declining public services and massive unemployment has created a perfect storm in a country that is steeped in debt and stagnant economic growth. Waves of mass protests are sweeping other European countries too. Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Albania, Greece and Ireland are facing unrest to varying degrees. France, Europe's second largest economy and one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, is virtually burning as violent protesters unleash some of the worst episodes of vandalism in French history. Against a backdrop of economic stagnation and a tradition of popular protest, it has witnessed escalating violence and looting. Violent fringe groups targeted public buildings, looted luxury boutiques and supermarkets and attacked police vehicles and officers. Luxury retail stores, including outlets of Apple, Louis Vuitton, Hermès and Rolex, have been targeted by looters as violent protests over the cost of living and government spending have erupted across France. Demonstrators have torched cars, vandalised buildings and clashed with riot police, leaving several cities grappling with disorder. In Paris, masked demonstrators have vandalised shops and restaurants, while burning barricades and clashes with security forces added to the unrest.

Against the backdrop of a fragmented parliament and mounting pressure ahead of the upcoming presidential election cycle, the protests have also become a vehicle for challenging President Emmanuel Macron's administration.

The scale of the violence has left both policymakers and observers around the world stunned. With the next presidential elections just six months away, and the country deeply divided between the far right and the far left, there are fears that the protests and violence could recur. The country is already in campaign mode ahead of the April elections, with far-right candidate Marine Le Pen leading the polls. She has positioned herself as a staunch law-and-order candidate while blaming the left for the chaos. Labour unions have already called for mass demonstrations on November 5 to protest the proposed budget cuts and tax measures. This is an acid test for the ruling dispensation. Although the triggers may vary across Italy, Spain, Portugal and Albania, high fuel and energy costs underpin the unrest in each case. Adding fuel to the fire is the intense election cycle in the coming months. High-stakes elections are scheduled in Spain, France, Italy, Poland and Greece amid the growing influence of far-right and anti-immigrant movements. If France cannot contain the unrest soon, the instability risks spilling across borders.

BANNALA GEETHA PRAVEEN Extends Dasara Greetings to KTR



"UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"On the occasion of the Dasara festival, former corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj, along with Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, met BRS Working President and former minister K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) in a courtesy visit. During the meeting, she conveyed her warm Dasara greetings and festival wishes to KTR.

RRR Southern part project handed over to HGCL

Hyderabad: Amidst the controversy surrounding the alleged irregularities in Radial Road 2 tenders floated by Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL), the State government has now entrusted the Southern part of Regional Ring Road (RRR) to HGCL. Congress MLA from Munugode Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy had charged irregularities in tenders and accused that they were being offered to Andhra based companies. He even said there was a loss of Rs.600 crore to the State exchequer in the tenders.

14-day drive to detect leprosy cases begins in Karimnagar



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Karimnagar October 22, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): The District Medical and Health Department launched a 14-day Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC) at the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) in Mohtaj Khana on Thursday to identify suspected cases and facilitate early treatment. District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Rajagopal Rao inaugurated the campaign in the presence of medical and health staff. The drive will continue until November 4. As part of the campaign, health workers and ASHA workers will create awareness about the symptoms of leprosy, identify people with suspected signs of the disease and refer them for medical examination and treatment. Dr. Rajagopal Rao stressed the importance of early diagnosis and completing the prescribed course of treatment to prevent disabilities. He urged people to overcome misconceptions about leprosy and avoid discrimination against those affected by the disease.

People who notice symptoms suggestive of leprosy should approach the nearest government health facility for examination and appropriate treatment, officials said. Medical Officer Dr. Imran Khan, health staff, ASHA workers and



other personnel participated in the launch programme.

The District Medical and Health Department launched a 14-day Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC) at the Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) in Mohtaj Khana on Thursday to identify suspected cases and facilitate early treatment. District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Rajagopal Rao inaugurated the campaign in the presence of medical and health staff. The drive will continue until November 4. As part of the campaign, health workers and ASHA workers will create awareness about the symptoms of leprosy, identify people with suspected signs of the disease and refer them for medical examination and treatment. Dr. Rajagopal Rao stressed the importance of early diagnosis and completing the prescribed course of treatment to prevent disabilities. He urged people to overcome misconceptions about leprosy and avoid discrimination against those affected by the disease. People who notice symptoms suggestive of leprosy should approach the nearest government health facility for examination and appropriate treatment, officials said. Medical Officer Dr. Imran Khan, health staff, ASHA workers and other personnel participated in the launch programme.

MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY Discusses Uppal Development Works with In-charge Zonal Commissioner



"UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy has urged officials to prioritize the comprehensive development of the Uppal constituency and take prompt measures to resolve public grievances. As part of this initiative, the MLA

met Uppal Zonal Commissioner in-charge Sanchit Gangwar and discussed various development works to be undertaken in the constituency. "During the meeting, they held detailed discussions on key issues, including the provision of basic infrastructure, road construction, improvement of the drainage system, and sanitation management across various divisions of the Uppal constituency. The MLA brought several public issues to the attention of the official and requested that immediate steps be taken to address them." Bandari Lakshma Reddy also stressed the need to expedite previously proposed development projects as well as pending works. He called upon officials from the concerned departments to work in coordination to ensure that residents do not face inconvenience. He further emphasized the need to focus on providing essential infrastructure in every division of the constituency. The MLA reiterated that the development of Uppal in all sectors remains his primary objective. He stated that he would continue to coordinate with officials to address public grievances and ensure the timely completion of development works. "BRS leaders were also present on the occasion.

Minister Sridhar Babu Participates in Sharannavaratri Celebrations Along with Vajresh Yadav and Parameshwar Reddy



"UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"Sharannavaratri celebrations are being held with great devotion and religious fervour across the Uppal Assembly constituency. As part of the festivities, District In-charge Minister Sridhar Babu, District Congress President Vajresh Yadav, and Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy participated as chief guests in Sharannavaratri celebrations organised at various locations

and offered special prayers to Goddess Durga. "The leaders first visited the Goddess Durga pandal organised by the VST Colony Welfare Association in Nacharam Division. Later, they offered prayers at the pandal set up in the Kapra tribal settlement under the leadership of Medchal Market Committee Vice-Chairman Vitthal Naik. "They also visited the Goddess Durga pandal at Kummari Basti in Uppal and participated in the Sharannavaratri celebrations being held at Ram Reddy Nagar in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division, seeking the blessings of the Goddess. "Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sridhar Babu wished that the blessings of Goddess Durga would always remain upon the people. He prayed for happiness, prosperity, good health and well-being in every family. He also expressed hope that the blessings of Goddess Durga would strengthen peace, brotherhood and unity in society. "The Minister stated that spiritual programmes organised with devotion not only promote religious awareness but also foster unity and harmony among people. "Later, the organisers of the respective pandals felicitated Minister Sridhar Babu, District Congress President Vajresh Yadav and Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy with traditional shawls in recognition of their participation. Local leaders, colony residents, devotees, Congress party leaders and workers attended the celebrations in large numbers.

Krishna Goud's Birthday Celebrated Grandly at Bhudevi Nagar Park

"Alwal October 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"Former DCC General Secretary Krishna Goud's birthday celebrations were held grandly at Bhudevi Nagar Park in the presence of party workers, well-wishers and supporters. On the occasion, Krishna Goud cut a birthday cake amidst enthusiastic greetings from those present. Sweets were distributed to mark the celebration, and party workers and well-wishers conveyed their heartfelt birthday wishes to him. The event was attended by Nimma Ashok Reddy, Mallela Shiva, TV Bhaskar, BN Ramesh, Rajender, Sudhesh Singh, Sudhakar Reddy, Shyam Sundar, Prabhakar, Naresh, Malleth Goud, Dasharath Yadav, Jyothi and other supporters and well-wishers, who participated in the celebrations and made the occasion memorable.



Congress Candidate Sama Ram Mohan Reddy Must Win Graduate MLC Elections with a Huge Majority



— Minister Sridhar Babu urges all graduates to register their votes without delay "UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"District In-charge Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu has called upon Congress leaders and workers to work collectively to ensure a landslide victory for Congress candidate Sama Ram Mohan Reddy in the upcoming Graduate MLC elections for the erstwhile Ranga Reddy district. "The minister attended a Congress party meeting held as part of the preparations for the Graduate MLC elections as the chief guest. "Addressing the meeting, Sridhar Babu urged party leaders and workers to work together to secure the Congress party's victory. He also appealed to all eligible graduates to register their votes without delay and actively contribute to the success of the party's candidate. "The meeting was attended by District Congress Committee President Vajresh Yadav, Parijata Narasimha Reddy, MLAs, constituency in-charges, Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, division presidents, district executive committee members and other Congress leaders.

Congress Leaders Extend Dasara Greetings to Rajya Sabha MP Vem Narender Reddy



"UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"On the occasion of Vijayadashami, Medchal District Congress Committee President Vajresh Yadav, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy, and senior Congress leaders Narsareddy and Bhupathi Reddy met Rajya Sabha MP Vem Narender Reddy and extended their Dasara greetings. "On the occasion, the leaders wished people good health, happiness, prosperity and well-being. They expressed hope that the festival of Vijayadashami would bring success, peace and prosperity into everyone's lives.

Everyone Must Strive to Fulfil the Ideals of Panduga Sayanna: Former BRS State Secretary Nerdham Bhaskar Goud



"Hyderabad, October 22 (Indian Chronicle):"The birth anniversary of Panduga Sayanna, a people's hero and a symbol of the self-respect of the Bahujan communities, was celebrated with great reverence at Telangana Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday. "On the occasion, leaders paid floral tributes to the portrait of Panduga Sayanna and remembered his contributions to society and his struggle for the welfare and dignity of the underprivileged sections. "The programme was attended by Nerdham Bhaskar Goud, former state secretary of the BRS party, former minister Srinivas Goud, former MLC Prabhakar, former BC member Kishore Goud, and other leaders. "Speaking on the occasion, Nerdham Bhaskar Goud said that Panduga Sayanna was a people's hero who fought for the self-respect and rights of the weaker and underprivileged sections of society. He stated that Sayanna's life and struggles continue to inspire the present generation. He called upon BCs and Bahujans to unite and work towards achieving social justice, equality and equal opportunities for all sections of society. The leaders emphasised that the true tribute to Panduga Sayanna would be to carry forward his ideals and work collectively for the progress and empowerment of the weaker and underprivileged sections.

Rising Prices Burden Common People: Gogarla Tirupathi



"Rising Prices of Essential Commodities Make Life Difficult for Common People" Kumrambheem, Asifabad, District. Reporter "Indian Chronicle" October. 23. "Asifabad, Gogarla Tirupathi, District Secretary of the CPI-ML Red Star Party in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, said that the continuous rise in the prices of essential commodities has made life increasingly difficult for poor and middle-class families. Speaking at a meeting held at the district headquarters on Thursday, he said that rising prices of sugar, rice, pulses, cooking oils, groundnuts and various vegetables were placing a heavy financial burden on ordinary people. He stated that families were already struggling with electricity bills, house rents, medical expenses and children's education costs. The rising prices of essential commodities had further worsened their financial difficulties, making it increasingly difficult to manage household expenses with limited incomes. Poor and Middle-Class Families Facing a Heavy Burden" Tirupathi said that daily wage labourers, construction workers, agricultural workers, unemployed youth and small traders were among those most affected by rising prices. A large portion of their daily

earnings was being spent on purchasing food items, leaving little money for other essential needs. "He expressed concern that many families were being forced to reduce their consumption of pulses and vegetables and avoid other nutritious food items to control household expenses. This could adversely affect the health of children, elderly people and pregnant women. "Government Must Take Steps to Control Prices" Gogarla Tirupathi said that rising prices, coupled with inadequate wages and declining employment opportunities, were worsening the financial conditions of working-class families. Many households were being forced to depend on loans to meet their daily needs. He demanded that the Central and State Governments take coordinated measures to control the prices of essential commodities. He also called for strict action against illegal hoarding and the creation of artificial shortages in the market. He urged the governments to strengthen the public distribution system and ensure that quality rice and other essential commodities, wherever feasible, were made available to the public at affordable prices. He stressed the need to ensure the timely distribution of ration supplies to poor families. "Protect the Living Standards of Ordinary People" Tirupathi called for an increase in minimum wages for workers and improvements in employment opportunities. He also urged the governments to ensure remunerative prices for farmers while making food products available to consumers at reasonable rates. He said that economic development should not be measured merely by increases in production and income. Ensuring access to basic necessities and enabling poor families to live with dignity were equally important indicators of development. He urged the Central and State Governments to control the prices of essential commodities and introduce welfare measures to provide financial relief to poor people, workers, farmers and middle-class families. Participants: Bharak Rao, Dayakar and others attended the meeting With Revolutionary Greetings.

Sarpanch Moharle Bapuji Felicitated During Sharada Devi Immersion



Festival Committee Honours Sarpanch for His Support in Organising Navaratri Celebrations Kumrambheem, Asifabad, District. Reporter "Indian Chronicle" October. 23. "Wankidi: The Sharada Devi immersion ceremony marking the conclusion of the Sharada Devi Navaratri celebrations was conducted with devotion and traditional fervour at Sarandi Gram Panchayat in Wankidi Mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. The village witnessed a spiritual atmosphere as villagers and devotees gathered in large numbers to offer special prayers to the Goddess. On this occasion, Sarandi village Sarpanch Moharle Bapuji participated in the celebrations and performed special pujas to Sharada Mata. He offered coconuts to the Goddess and prayed for the happiness, good health and prosperity of all village residents. He also wished for peace, harmony, unity and development in every family. Devotees enthusiastically participated in the immersion ceremony, creating a festive atmosphere throughout the village. "Sarpanch Moharle Bapuji Felicitated" The Sharada Devi festival committee members felicitated Sarandi village Sarpanch Moharle Bapuji with a shawl in recognition of his support and cooperation in organising the Navaratri celebrations and making necessary arrangements for the devotees. "The committee members expressed their gratitude to the Sarpanch for extending his support to the successful conduct of the festivities. "On this occasion, several people stated that the

participation and cooperation of public representatives in religious and cultural programmes help strengthen unity, mutual understanding and brotherhood among villagers. They added that celebrating festivals collectively helps preserve local traditions and pass them on to future generations. "Navaratri Celebrations Conducted with Devotion" During the Navaratri festivities, villagers worshipped Sharada Mata with great devotion and performed special prayers to seek the blessings of the Goddess. Devotees participated in the immersion ceremony marking the conclusion of the celebrations, reflecting their faith and devotion.

The collective participation of villagers was a notable feature of the festivities. Village elders observed that religious and cultural celebrations promote friendship and strengthen social unity among people. Such events also play an important role in preserving the village's traditions and cultural heritage. On the occasion, several people wished that the blessings of Sharada Mata would bring happiness and prosperity to every family in Sarandi village. They expressed hope that the village would progress in all fields and that unity, peace and brotherhood among the people would continue to grow. "Members of the Sharada Devi festival committee, village elders, activists, devotees and other villagers participated in the programme."

MLA Marri Rajasekhar Reddy Extends Dasara Greetings to BRS Working President KTR



Alwal, October 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE) Kumrambheem, Asifabad, District. Reporter "Indian Chronicle" October. 23. "Wankidi: Awareness Programme on Free Legal Services Held at Doddiguda. People facing legal problems, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, should make use of free legal services available to eligible individuals, said G. Anusha, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority and Judge. An awareness programme on free legal services was conducted on Thursday at the Doddiguda Gram Panchayat in Wankidi Mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. During the programme, G. Anusha interacted with villagers, explained the importance of free legal aid and provided guidance on accessing legal assistance. "Free Legal Aid for Eligible Beneficiaries" Speaking on the occasion, G. Anusha explained that eligible individuals, including poor people, women, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and persons with disabilities, could avail themselves of free legal assistance. "She stated that the objective of providing free legal services was to ensure that financial difficulties did not prevent eligible people from accessing justice. Those who could not afford legal representation were encouraged to approach the appropriate Legal Services Authority for assistance. "She also advised villagers not to hesitate to seek legal support when facing difficulties and stressed the importance of understanding their legal rights. "Toll-Free Number 15100 for Legal

to KTR and expressed his hope that the auspicious occasion of Dasara would bring happiness, good health, peace and prosperity into the lives of people. The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere, with the leaders exchanging festive greetings on the occasion of the Vijayadashami festival.

Paytm Launches Family Lounge Access RuPay Credit Card

Hyderabad, October 22 (Indian Chronicle) : Paytm (One 97 Communications Limited), in partnership with AU Small Finance Bank, has launched what it describes as India's first Family Lounge

Access RuPay Credit Card, according to a statement released by the company representatives in the city on Thursday. The lifetime-free credit card offers rewards of up to 2% on eligible Paytm UPI transactions and up to 5% on Paytm Travel bookings and Paytm Gold purchases, the company said. Cardholders can also avail themselves of up to 12 complimentary airport lounge visits annually. The family lounge access facility allows up to four family members to use the benefit on each visit, the statement added. Interested customers can apply for the credit card through the Paytm app.

Congress seeks grand celebrations for National Education Day

Mohammed Tajuddin urges Collector to organise November 11 programme with government funding to mark Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's birth anniversary.



Karimnagar October 22, Khaja Sikandar Mohiuddin (Correspondent): Mohammed Tajuddin, chairman of the Karimnagar District Congress Minority Department, has urged the district administration to organise National Education Day celebrations on a grand scale on November 11 to mark the birth anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister. In a memoran-

dum submitted to the District Collector on Thursday, Mr. Tajuddin requested that the celebrations be held at the auditorium in the Collectorate under the Collector's supervision, with government funding.

He recalled that National Education Day was celebrated on a grand scale during the Congress-led government's tenure from 2004 to 2014, with cultural programmes and speeches by ministers, MLAs, prominent social and political leaders, and senior government officials. He alleged that the celebrations were scaled down during the BRS regime from 2015 to 2023. Mr. Tajuddin highlighted Maulana Azad's contribution to the freedom struggle and the development of education in the country. He said official celebrations would help familiarise younger generations with Azad's ideals and promote the values of education, national unity and communal harmony. He urged the authorities to make arrangements well in advance and organise cultural programmes and speeches by eminent personalities, as in previous years. Former Waqf Board chairman S. A. Mohsin, City Congress Minority Department chairman Ahmed Ali, and senior leaders Nehal Ahmed, Abdul Rahman, Kaleemuddin, Mohammed Ameer, M. A. Jameel and Abdul Bari were among those present.

Nerdham Bhaskar Goud Extends Dasara Greetings to KTR

"Hyderabad, October 22 (Indian Chronicle): "On the occasion of the Dasara festival, Nerdham Bhaskar Goud, former state secretary of the BRS party, met BRS working president and former minister Kalvakuntla Taraka Rama Rao (KTR) at Telangana Bhavan on Thursday and felicitated him. He conveyed his warm Dasara greetings to KTR. On the auspicious occasion of Vijayadashami, Bhaskar Goud expressed his wishes for happiness, prosperity, good health, peace and progress in people's lives. He also wished that the people of Telangana would lead happy and prosperous lives and that the state would achieve further development across all sectors.



Pioneer Completes 100 Years of Agricultural Innovation

"Hyderabad, October 22 (Indian Chronicle) : Pioneer, a leading global seed brand owned by Vylor, has completed 100 years of agricultural innovation. Robert Cann, Head of Strategic Programs, APAC, at Vylor, said in a statement on Thursday. He said Pioneer has been serving Indian farmers for over 54 years and works with more than 10 million farmers across over 70 countries. The company supports farmers in Telangana in maize cultivation, Rajasthan in pearl

millet, Uttar Pradesh in mustard and Bihar in rice, helping improve crop yields and farm profitability. Pioneer has the support of over 130 research centres and more than 3,000 scientists. The company is focusing on developing seeds that can withstand climate change challenges. Since introducing the first hybrid maize seeds to the market in 1926, Pioneer has continued to advance agricultural innovation, he added.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Hostel Workers Join CITU



"New District Committee Elected with 12 Members" Kumrambheem, Asifabad, District. Reporter "Indian Chronicle" October. 23. "Komaram Bheem Asifabad:

A general body meeting of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Hostel Workers was held at the CITU office in the district headquarters on Thursday. Attracted by CITU's struggles for workers' rights and the achievements secured through its movements, hostel workers joined the union. CITU District Joint Secretary Velishala Krishnamachari welcomed the workers by presenting them with CITU scarves. He assured them that CITU would continue to support workers in resolving their problems and securing their rights. Later, a new 12-member district committee was elected, with Satyamma as President, Kavitha as Secretary, and Suma as Treasurer. The committee resolved to work unitedly for fair wages, job security, and the resolution of hostel workers' issues.

Free Legal Aid Awareness Programme Held at Doddiguda



"Kumrambheem, Asifabad, District. Reporter "Indian Chronicle" October. 23. "Wankidi: Awareness Programme on Free Legal Services Held at Doddiguda. People facing legal problems, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, should make use of free legal services available to eligible individuals, said G. Anusha, Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority and Judge. An awareness programme on free legal services was conducted on Thursday at the Doddiguda Gram Panchayat in Wankidi Mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. During the programme, G. Anusha interacted with villagers, explained the importance of free legal aid and provided guidance on accessing legal assistance. "Free Legal Aid for Eligible Beneficiaries" Speaking on the occasion, G. Anusha explained that eligible individuals, including poor people, women, members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and persons with disabilities, could avail themselves of free legal assistance. "She stated that the objective of providing free legal services was to ensure that financial difficulties did not prevent eligible people from accessing justice. Those who could not afford legal representation were encouraged to approach the appropriate Legal Services Authority for assistance. "She also advised villagers not to hesitate to seek legal support when facing difficulties and stressed the importance of understanding their legal rights. "Toll-Free Number 15100 for Legal



Assistance" G. Anusha urged people to contact the toll-free number 15100 for information and assistance regarding free legal services. She explained that people could seek information about available legal assistance and clarify their doubts regarding legal rights and procedures through the helpline. She emphasised that creating awareness about legal services in rural areas was essential, particularly among poor families, women, tribal communities and other disadvantaged sections of society. She encouraged eligible individuals to understand their rights and seek legal assistance whenever necessary. Importance of Legal Awareness in Rural Areas

The District Legal Services Authority works towards making justice accessible to everyone, she explained. She advised villagers to learn about eligibility criteria, application procedures and the legal services available to them. "She further stated that awareness programmes at the village level could help people better understand their legal rights and the assistance available to them. "The programme highlighted the importance of free legal services and explained the ways in which eligible people could access legal assistance. Villagers were encouraged to utilise these services to address their legal problems. The programme concluded with a call to the public to make use of free legal aid services and contact the toll-free helpline 15100 for assistance."

Vaaradhi Trust demands law mandating generic prescriptions, penalties for violations



Hyderabad Correspondent, October 22 (Indian Chronicle): Vaaradhi Trust has called for amendments to existing laws to make prescribing medicines by their generic names mandatory for doctors and introduce penalties for violations, arguing that the move would help reduce patients' expenditure on medicines and improve access to affordable healthcare.

The demand was raised by Subbarao Kattamuri, chairman of the Board of Trustees of Vaaradhi Trust, and trustee M. Ravindra Vikram at a press conference at Hyderabad Press Club on Thursday. The Trust also proposed capping the maximum retail price (MRP) of branded generic medicines at no more than 30% above the price to stockists (PTS). It called for a legal requirement for pharmaceutical companies to manufacture and sell at least 25% of their

products in generic form. The representatives said the organisation's Generics for All initiative aimed to promote affordable medicines, improve public awareness and expand access to quality-assured generic drugs.

The Trust also sought the removal of Rule 65(11A) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, citing concerns over the existing regulatory framework. It urged the government to establish generic medicine outlets in all government hospitals and autonomous public health institutions and improve the availability of medicines at Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras. Subbarao said Uttar Pradesh had 4,226 Janaushadhi Kendras as of June 30, 2026, compared with 249 in Telangana. It called for a more equitable distribution of these outlets, greater pricing transparency and wider public awareness of generic medicines.

Meeting Organises

To conduct MLC Election of Saran Teacher's Assembly Segment on 23 Oct under peaceful and fearless atmosphere the District Election Officer cum District Magistrate West Champaran Taranjot Singh addressed the concerned election staff in a joint brief with the SSP Bettiah Kumar Gautam and the SP Bagha Rajesh Kumar. to the concerned Election officers and staff as well as directed them to follow the norms of the Election Commission. As it is the duty of concerned staff and Officers to realise their responsibilities. As the voters should be guided to follow the rules of Election department. All the zonal Magistrates and Sector Magistrates should follow the norms of election. As the role of presiding Officers, P1, P2, P3 is also important. At polling booth Mobile phone is banned. The voters should come to use their franchise in peaceful atmosphere. As the SSP Bettiah Kumar Gautam said that all the staff should perform their duty in fearless atmosphere. The police team would be active and be ready to cooperate them in this important work. As the SP Bagha Rajesh Kumar also said that the polling team would reach on their polling centre in peaceful atmosphere. The police team is active to maintain peace during the time of election. Others. Who were presented in the meeting as the DDC West Champaran Kajle Baibhav Nitin the ADM Rajeev Ranjan Sinha, the DPRO Mrs Rochna Madri. etc. ""

Defalcation has been Detected in Edu. Deptt. ""A major Defalcation has been Detected in Education Department of Bhagalpur district in Bihar where 98 lac rupees transferred in the account of a fake teacher on the name of salary. As the payment was sent in the account of a fake woman teacher Tannu Shree. As the matter came to the light the payment was stopped and a probe team was formed which led by the DDC Bhagalpur. In probe it was found that the payment was on since 2025 on the name of a ghost (fake) teacher. In this connection the involvement of a Computer op-

erator was found who had formed a fake ID on the name of a fake teacher and payment was on. After that the District Magistrate Bhagalpur formed a probe team and wrote to the higher officers of the concerned department. As in this connection the District Education Officer Bhagalpur Chandan Kumar and the DPO Education Department Shudhir Chandra Chaudhary were suspended. In this connection a case was also lodged and further investigation was on ""

Vengeance Occurred during Idol Immersion ""Vengeance occurred in several areas of Bihar during Idol Immersion of Goddess Durga after Durga Puja Festival in which the incidents like stabbing, arson and bullet firing occurred and several persons were injured and hospitalised in several areas of Bihar. As an incident occurred in the area of Phulwarisarif Patna during Idol Immersion in which a dozen persons got dagger injury and hospitalised in AIIMS Patna in which two injured Ram Kumar and Arun Kumar were in critical state. In this connection a case was lodged at concerned PS and raids are on to arrest the guilty persons. Old enmity would be reason behind this incident. As in SitaMadhi District of Bihar a vengeance occurred during Idol Immersion under the area of Bajpatty PS of the District in which a youth named Sudhir Kumar was stabbed to death. After that the angry mob burnt Tyre and paralysed road services several hours. As the police rushed to the spot and pacified the mob and restored road services.

Incident occurred in Punpun Bazar locality under Masaudhi Subdivision where the police blowed lathi to disperse mob during the period of idol Immersion in which dozen persons were injured. In Patna city locality a teen aged boy was shot dead during idol Immersion, the victim was rushed to PMCH where he lost his life. In another incident a spouse named Kiran Devi and Ranjan Madal shot dead in Islampur village under Nawgachhiya Subdivision of Bhagalpur district in Bihar. ""Ajay Kr Mishra "Bettiah/Bihar

May Goddess's Blessings Always Be Upon the People

"" Indian Chronicle, "Secunderabad, October 22: ""The procession of Goddess Nalla Pochamma was held with great devotion under the auspices of the Sri Nalla Pochamma Temple Committee in Boudhanagar Division. "BRS leader, former ward member, President of the Secunderabad Padmashali Sangham, and President of the Secunderabad SC, ST, BC and Minority Cell, Manda Jagan, attended the programme as the chief guest. He offered special prayers to the Goddess and sought her blessings. "A large number of devotees participated in the procession with great devotion, creating a spiritual and festive atmosphere in the locality. "The organisers of the event were Golla Srinu, K. Raju and B. Srisailam. P. Venkatesh, Shekhar, Vinay Kumar, Brahmachari, Chintakindi Mallesh, Oggu Sridhar, Kondalanna, Anand Kumar, Tautam Satish,



Puli Shivakumar, Sunny, Samala Shivakumar, Samala Raju, Amanchi Venkatesh, Vaitla Ramu and others participated in the celebrations.

Uppal Constituency Development Works Must Be Accelerated



MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Holds Discussions with MMC Commissioner Vijay Krishna Reddy ""UPPAL, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): ""Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy has urged officials to accelerate various development works in the Uppal constituency and ensure better basic infrastructure facilities for the public. In this regard, the MLA met MMC Commissioner Vijay Krishna Reddy, IAS, on Thursday and discussed several issues related to the overall development of the constituency. "During the meeting, the MLA discussed various public issues in different areas of the constituency, including the provision of basic infrastructure, road development, improvement of the drainage system, and sanitation management. He urged the Commissioner to identify the

difficulties faced by residents in their daily lives and resolve them on a priority basis. "The MLA also emphasized the need to take necessary steps to complete pending development works at the earliest. He called for special attention to improving sanitation, roads, and drainage facilities while ensuring that essential infrastructure is made available in all areas of the constituency. Stressing the importance of the comprehensive development of the Uppal constituency, Bandari Lakshma Reddy urged officials from the concerned departments to work in coordination. He called for prioritizing development projects according to public needs and ensuring that necessary measures are taken without delay to address residents' grievances.

HMWSSB plans 'Green Water' filling station in Kokapet

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) is preparing to supply treated 'Green Water' for non-potable uses to reduce pressure on the city's drinking water sources. As part of this effort, the HMWSSB Managing Director, K Ashok Reddy, on Thursday visited Kokapet to examine the feasibility of setting up a Green Water filling station. He inspected the water-quality testing laboratory and reviewed testing procedures, standards and result-recording processes.

MLA Marri Rajashekar Reddy Urges Housing Officials to Resolve Key Issues in Malkajgiri

"Alwal October 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE) "" Malkajgiri MLA Marri Rajashekar Reddy, along with other MLAs, met V.P. Gautam, IAS, Government Special Secretary, Housing Department, and Managing Director of the Telangana State Housing Corporation, at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat on Thursday. During the meeting, the MLA brought several key housing-related issues concerning the Malkajgiri constituency to the official's attention and urged him to take prompt measures for their resolution. The MLA primarily highlighted the need for transparency in the allocation of double-bedroom houses, urging the authorities to select beneficiaries through a lottery system to ensure fairness and provide housing to genuinely eligible poor families. He also requested the speedy initiation of construction works for the proposed Indiramma housing towers at Kowkooor. He urged the department to conduct the foundation-laying ceremony at the earliest and ensure that construction begins without unnecessary delays, helping poor and middle-class families realise their dream of owning a house. Another major issue raised during the meeting was the drinking water shortage faced by residents of the Rajiv Gruhakalpa and VAMBAY housing complexes in Kowkooor. The MLA called for coordinated efforts by the Housing Department and the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) to address the problem. He urged the officials to take necessary steps for the construction of overhead water tanks and the provision of essential infrastructure to ensure a regular drinking water supply to residents. Speaking at the media point after the meeting,



Marri Rajashekar Reddy stressed the importance of coordination among the concerned departments to improve housing facilities in the constituency and ensure that eligible poor families receive the benefits of government welfare schemes. MLAs Sabitha Indra Reddy, Devireddy Sudheer Reddy, Madhavaram Krishna Rao, K.P. Vivekanand Goud, Bandari Lakshma Reddy and others participated in the meeting.

Ranjith Singh Appointed as Supra Youth Wings President



-15 Years of Dedicated Service Recognised – Supra Foundation Chairman Gaddam Sai Kiran Takes Key Decision ""RAMANTHAPUR, OCTOBER 22 (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Recognising his 15 years of dedicated service to the Supra Foundation, its founder and chairman, Gaddam Sai Kiran, has appointed Ranjith Singh as the President of Supra Youth Wings. Speaking on the occasion,

Ranjith Singh expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Gaddam Sai Kiran for reposing faith in him and entrusting him with the responsibility. He assured that he would work with greater dedication to unite the youth and expand social service activities on a wider scale. "Ranjith Singh also extended special thanks to all Supra members who attended the appointment programme, supported him and encouraged him in his new role. He conveyed his sincere gratitude to Shankar, Sudarshan Reddy, Sudhakar, Hanumantha Rao, Venkatesh Gupta, Venkat Sai, Prasad, Rizzu, Charan, Shiva, Santhu, Anil, Praveen, Pawan and other members who participated in the programme. "The Supra Foundation has been consistently extending support to the poor and people facing hardships without expecting anything in return. The foundation undertakes several service initiatives, including financial assistance, medical aid and educational support for those in need. Ranjith Singh stated that, inspired by the foundation's spirit of selfless service, he would continue to work with greater commitment towards public service and social welfare in the future.

Restaurant Week India Goes National

""Hyderabad, October 22 (Indian Chronicle): The second edition of Kotak Solitaire Restaurant Week India, organised by the Dining Collective in partnership with Kotak Mahindra Bank, will be held across ten cities from October 16 to November 1, 2026. Jyoti Samajpati, Executive Vice President, Head of Propositions and Retail Bank Marketing at Kotak Mahindra Bank, announced this in a statement on Thursday. Speaking alongside Aatish Nath, co-founder of

Restaurant Week India, she said the festival would feature special dining menus at over 100 restaurants through the District app. All Kotak credit cardholders will receive a 48-hour priority booking window, while Kotak Solitaire cardholders will enjoy additional exclusive benefits. The inaugural edition in April attracted over 6,000 diners and generated more than ₹1 crore in revenue for participating restaurants, she said.

Kongari Dharani Rani Appointed TRS Hyderabad District Women's President

" Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, October 22: ""Kongari Dharani Rani, an educationist from Secunderabad, has been appointed Hyderabad district women's president of the Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) by party chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha. She was handed her appointment letter at the party's central office. "The appointment is aimed at strengthening the party's presence in Hyderabad and building greater support among women, Kavitha said. "Expressing gratitude to Kavitha for reposing faith in her and entrusting her with the responsibility, Dharani Rani said she would work towards resolving issues faced by women, with particular focus on their safety, empowerment and welfare. "She said she would coordinate with party leaders and workers to strengthen the TRS organisation in Hyderabad and reach out to more people, especially women, ahead of the upcoming Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections. "Dharani Rani said her principal objective was to ensure that the TRS flag flies high in the municipal elections. She pledged to work hard to achieve the goal and present the victory as a gift to Kavitha in recognition of the trust placed in her.



Grand Celebrations Mark the Birth Anniversary of People's Hero Panduga Sayanna in Ramanthapur



" – Achieving political power for BCs is the true tribute to Panduga Sayanna "" – Social justice is possible only when all Bahujans unite and fight together: Kompelli Upender ""RAMANTHAPUR, October 22 (Indian Chronicle): ""The birth anniversary of Panduga Sayanna, popularly remembered as the Telangana warrior, people's hero and beloved son of Palamuru, was celebrated with great enthusiasm at the Mini Tank Bund in Ramanthapur. The programme was organised under the aegis of the Ramanthapur Mudiraj Sangham United Forum. On the occasion, members paid floral tributes to the portrait of

Panduga Sayanna and recalled his fighting spirit and contribution to society. ""Speaking at the programme, Kompelli Upender, president of the Mudiraj Sangham United Forum, said that achieving political power for Backward Classes (BCs), as envisioned by Panduga Sayanna, would be the true tribute to the legendary people's hero. He explained that Sayanna's struggle was not merely against economic exploitation but was also a fight for social justice and a fair share for BCs in political power. ""Recalling Sayanna's courage in challenging the autocratic rule of the Nizam, Upender said that he had worked towards establishing a Bahujan-oriented society. He stated that the time had come to fulfil Sayanna's ideals and emphasised that achieving political empowerment would be possible if all Bahujan communities united and moved forward with a common purpose. ""He further observed that Panduga Sayanna had earned a lasting place in history as a people's hero who fought against the exploitation of the feudal landlords and distributed wealth taken from them among the poor. He called upon the youth to draw inspiration from Sayanna's life and struggle and work towards achieving social justice. ""Mudiraj Sangham leaders Pisari Shankar, B. Suresh, K. Chandrakanth, P. Muralikrishna, T. Jettappa, G. Krishna, G. Praveen Kumar, Jagadish, Keerthi, K. Manoj Kumar, Vijay Kumar, Ashok and others participated

Mumbai 4th most polluted city in world, air quality index 165: US group



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

A day after Dussehra, Mumbai woke up to a blanket of haze on Wednesday, with the city ranking fourth among the world's most polluted cities and recording an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 165, according to IQAir, a US-based air quality monitoring organisation. The reading also made Mumbai the most polluted city in India at the time. Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo topped the global list with an AQI of 201, followed by Lahore in Pakistan at 190 and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at 180. Mumbai ranked ahead of Delhi, which recorded an AQI of 164. The IQAir readings identified PM2.5, fine particulate matter that can penetrate deep into the lungs, as one of the prominent pollutants in Mumbai. The assessment was based on readings from six monitoring stations, including the US Consulate General in Mumbai.

However, the findings differed sharply from those of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), which recorded

an AQI of 113 for Mumbai on Wednesday afternoon. Among the 23 active monitoring stations, Colaba recorded the highest AQI at 160, followed by Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) at 150 and Kherwadi in Bandra East at 142.

Civic officials attributed the discrepancy to differences in the methodologies used by IQAir and Indian government agencies. While IQAir uses hourly averages to capture recent changes in air quality within a smaller geographical radius, CPCB and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) monitors measure ambient air quality at specific locations. Despite the lower readings recorded by government monitors, Mumbai's air quality deteriorated on Wednesday. The city's average AQI had remained at 102 until Tuesday. Mumbai has typically experienced poor air quality during the post-monsoon months, when the withdrawal of rain leaves dust particles suspended in the atmosphere for prolonged periods. This year, however, air quality began deteriorating earlier, with the AQI crossing the 100 mark on October 2. The early onset and persistence of poor air quality have been linked to dry weather conditions associated with the El Niño phenomenon. The conditions have contributed to an early withdrawal of the monsoon and are expected to limit the possibility of relief from winter rainfall. Tuhin Banerji, an environmental scientist, said Mumbai's air quality was likely to deteriorate further over the coming week. "This year, due to El Niño, the breeze from the Middle East is just bringing in a lot of dryness. Furthermore, there is also NaCl from the sea, with these minute particles from the sea also getting absorbed in the atmosphere and floating around for much longer. There has been no relief and the air quality will further worsen in the week ahead,"

Retired Nashik cop placed under digital arrest, loses Rs 71 lakh in fake terrorism case

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

digital arrest The fraud began on September 28, when a woman identifying herself as Inspector Sima Roy called the victim and claimed to be from the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) headquarters in Mumbai. A 68-year-old retired policeman from Nashik was allegedly kept under digital arrest for nearly 20 days and duped of Rs 71 lakh by cyber fraudsters posing as officials of the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA), who threatened to implicate him in a terror-linked case and a Rs 70-crore money-laundering investigation.

According to the police, the victim, who retired from the police department as an assistant sub-inspector around a decade ago, was threatened with arrest and the seizure of his property. The fraudsters allegedly convinced him that his Aadhaar card had been recovered from a terrorist arrested in Kashmir and had been used to open a bank account through which Rs 70 crore was laundered.

The fraud began on September 28, when a woman identifying herself as Inspector Sima Roy called the victim and claimed to be from the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) headquarters in Mumbai. She asked whether he had ever visited Kashmir. After he denied having travelled there, she allegedly told him that two terrorists had been arrested in Kashmir and that one of them possessed his Aadhaar card. She then claimed that the suspects were in the custody of the Lucknow ATS and that he would have to speak to its officials. About an hour later, the victim received a WhatsApp video call from a person identifying himself as Vikram Singh, who appeared in a police uniform. The caller allegedly told him that his Aadhaar details had been used to open an account with a private bank and launder Rs 70 crore, as mentioned in a First Information Report (FIR). The victim denied having any account with the bank or being involved in money laundering.



The caller posing as Singh subsequently claimed that the NIA chief had approved a preliminary investigation into the victim's assets. The fraudsters allegedly questioned him about his family, finances and investments and threatened him with arrest and property seizure. Between September 28 and October 17, the callers allegedly kept the victim under digital arrest and warned him against leaving his home. They also demanded details of his savings and persuaded him to transfer his money to bank accounts provided by them. The victim transferred Rs 41 lakh, Rs 25 lakh and Rs 5 lakh in three transactions on October 5, 8 and 13, respectively, taking his total loss to Rs 71 lakh. The callers allegedly stopped responding after the final transaction, following which he realised that he had been cheated. He approached the Nashik City Cyber Police on October 17 and lodged a complaint, according to the FIR. "The victim alleged that the fraudsters used the names Sima Roy, Vikram Singh and Rakesh Agarwal, while some communication also took place through the messaging platform Signal. The Nashik Cyber Police have registered a case and have given letters to the bank and are waiting for a reply for further investigation," said a police officer of the cyber police station in Nashik.

Another student suicide in Mumbai hostel, month after Sahil Wakode died at IIT

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

A second-year Chemical Engineering student at Mumbai's Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Siddhesh Patil, died by suicide in his hostel room on Tuesday night, in an incident that comes amid continuing protests at IIT Bombay over the death of another second-year student and concerns over campus mental-health support and institutional accountability. Patil was found in his room on the second floor of Hostel 5 on the ICT's Matunga campus. The incident is believed to have occurred between 10 pm and midnight. A senior institute official confirmed the death, adding that the police had been informed and an investigation was underway. The police received information that a 19-year-old had committed suicide. "A 19-year-old second-year Chemical Engineering student at the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT) was found dead in his hostel room. We have registered an Accidental Death Report." The Matunga police said. The police said that they are yet to determine the cause of the death. "We have registered an ADR; we await the post mortem analysis to determine the cause of the death. We will record the statements of his family and friends to ascertain why he took extreme steps. We are investigating the matter," the police added.

While the institute has not issued an official statement, Vice-Chancellor A B Pandit informed students and faculty members about the incident through a message circulated on campus. "The police have been informed, and they have prepared a statement from all concerned and have taken necessary steps to release his mortal remains to his family members," the message stated. A classmate said Patil, who was from Nashik, was undergoing treatment for depression with a doctor in the city. According to the classmate, Patil had spoken to his doctor on Tuesday night about wanting to end his life. The doctor subsequently alerted his parents, who contacted students in the hostel and asked them to check on him. "By the time we reached his room, he had died," the classmate said, adding that fewer students were on campus owing to the Dussehra festival. Patil was taken to a hospital by the institute administration but was declared dead on arrival. The incident comes a month after the death of Sahil Wakode, a 20-year-old second-year BTech student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, who died by suicide on September 18. His death triggered sustained protests on the Powai campus, with students demanding an independent investigation, greater transparency in disciplinary proceedings and reforms to the institute's student welfare and mental-health support systems. Wakode's parents alleged that he had faced caste-based discrimination and harassment by a faculty mem-



ber. The allegations were denied by the institute, which said it had received no complaint from him about caste discrimination. Police registered an abetment-to-suicide case on the basis of the family's complaint, and the investigation was transferred to the Mumbai Police Crime Branch. The protests continued into October. On October 18, Wakode's parents and student protesters were detained as police cleared a protest site near the IIT Bombay main gate, where students had been demonstrating for nearly a month.

DRI arrests five in alleged gold smuggling case

HYDERABAD: Five persons were arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence for allegedly smuggling foreign-origin (FO) gold from Bangladesh to Hyderabad via Kolkata. Acting on specific inputs about a gang involved in procuring and transporting smuggled gold, the officers of the Hyderabad Zonal Unit (HZU) and Vijayawada Regional Unit (RU) intercepted a Scorpio vehicle on the outskirts of Vijayawada. During questioning, the two occupants allegedly disclosed that they had received the foreign currency as part of the sale proceeds of smuggled gold and were involved in delivering the gold on the outskirts of Vijayawada. Acting swiftly on the information, the officers identified three other members of the gang travelling towards Hyderabad in a public bus. They intercepted the trio at a toll plaza and recovered three foreign-origin gold bars weighing approximately 3.1 kg. The bars had been concealed in a pouch tied around their waists. Foreign currency concealed in a secret cavity in the vehicle was seized. All five persons allegedly involved in procuring and transporting the contraband were arrested, produced before the court and remanded to judicial custody.

CJP leaders Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka face fresh custody request by Delhi Police



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

New Delhi: The Delhi Police sought a further three days of judicial custody for Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka in connection with the Jantar Mantar trespassing case. The two activists were brought to Mandir Marg Police Station for production before the Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) court after their previous judicial custody expired. CJP Legal Affairs Head Ratna Singh also arrived at the police station ahead of the proceedings. The hearing before the SEM court is underway, and the magistrate is yet to pronounce a decision on the Delhi Police's request for a further three days of judicial custody.

Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court allowed Das and Ranka to withdraw their plea seeking their release and challenging the SEM court's order extending their custody, without expressing any opinion on the merits of the matter. A

single-judge Bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad had asked the counsel representing the two activists to consider withdrawing the petition and await the SEM court proceedings before pursuing an appropriate legal remedy. The court observed that if the activists secured relief from the SEM court, continuing the proceedings before it would serve no purpose. The development comes after SEM Ritu Raj extended the judicial custody of the two CJP leaders until October 21 on Monday, observing that their conduct raised concerns about the likelihood of a breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquillity. In its order, the SEM court recorded that the two leaders had allegedly violated bonds furnished before the SEM, South-West District, on October 11 and subsequently committed a breach of peace in the present case. The magistrate also cited material placed on record by the investigating officer regarding the apprehension of a breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquillity. The order further directed the duo to furnish fresh sureties after an inquiry found the earlier ones unfit. Das and Ranka, along with CJP member Ajinkya Shinde, were among 14 people detained on October 13 after they allegedly entered Jantar Mantar through private premises and obstructed police personnel from discharging their official duties. The CJP members were protesting against alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and raised slogans against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar. The Delhi Police had earlier opposed their release, citing alleged repeated violations of the law and apprehensions that their release could lead to further violations and encourage others to engage in similar acts.

AI deepfake threat looms over 2027 Assembly elections, intelligence agencies warn

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

New Delhi: The Union Government has repeatedly issued advisories warning against the growing threat of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated deepfakes and their potential to compromise digital systems. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has also warned against the "Boss Scam", in which fraudsters impersonate chief executives and senior officials to deceive finance teams into transferring funds.

AI-generated deepfakes have been a concern for some time. However, intelligence agencies have warned that the problem could assume alarming proportions in the coming months, with elections in several states approaching and the potential for deepfakes to penetrate the political system on a much larger scale. Seven states are scheduled to go to the polls in 2027, namely Goa, Gujarat, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur. Assembly elections in these states are expected between February and December 2027. Intelligence agencies are keeping a particularly close watch on Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Manipur, where they anticipate a heightened risk of attempts by anti-national elements. An Intelligence Bureau official said the atmosphere in the country is already charged. There are ongoing anti-Special Intensive Revision (SIR) protests taking place, and with the political atmosphere heating up, many elements would look to have a field day by putting up content that is AI-generated.

"AI-generated videos of top politicians will be the most preferred choice of these elements. Elements, not just from across the border, but those within the country would look to create such deepfake videos and circulate them widely on social media," the official said. Another official said that apart from the generation of such deepfake videos of political leaders, the other major problem is the scale at which it is being planned. "In normal circumstances, such elements would push five to ten videos a day of political leaders with fake messages being attributed to them. However, as the elections near, such elements would look to generate at least 100-150 deepfake videos a day and circulate them widely," the official said. The intention of generating a large number of videos is clearly aimed at stressing the system and the fact-checkers. Debunking so many videos a day would be extremely challenging, and there is a good chance that a few of them may stay within the system and remain uncontested. This is the goal of these elements, the official said. Another official said those generating such videos are clearly targeting rural sectors of states where elections are scheduled in 2027. In the urban areas, the awareness of such technology and content is higher among the people.



At least 30 per cent of people are able to identify such content and debunk it. That is not the case in rural India. Those parts of these sectors blindly believe what they see and circulate it. By the time the video is fact-checked and debunked, the damage may already have been done.

"In many cases, it has also been found that many do not even bother to check what the fact-checkers or the government and agencies are saying about these videos," the official said. This helps scammers keep the content out in the public domain for a longer time and hope the fake narrative they are pushing is set in the minds of the public. In 2024, one survey found 22 per cent of Indians encountered political deepfakes. A study found that 50 per cent of respondents watched deepfake videos within 12 months. During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, it was found that 75 per cent of the voters were exposed to synthetic media. Officials say these elements are adopting different strategies for rural and urban India. In urban areas, political deepfakes would continue to be circulated on platforms such as X and YouTube.

The problem, however, is bigger in rural areas where such content is pushed directly to phones through WhatsApp forwards and massive voice-cloning broadcast campaigns. On platforms such as YouTube, X, or Instagram, legal requests can be made to take down such content. However, the problem is when it is pushed directly on mobile phones through WhatsApp. Such content is widely forwarded, and by the time action is taken, the damage is already done. The agencies are particularly concerned about such videos in states like Punjab, Manipur and Uttar Pradesh. In UP, the push would be heavy in the rural parts. In Punjab and Manipur, the problem can be immense as both states are volatile in nature and anti-national elements would look to vitiate the atmosphere by pushing in massive amounts of political deepfake videos, an official said.

Delhi records first poor air day of season as temperatures dip



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

New Delhi: Delhi recorded its first 'poor' air quality day of the season on Wednesday, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) settling at 245, the highest in 100 days, as temperatures began to drop. The last time the city recorded a comparable AQI was on July 13, when the index stood at 246, according to data. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on Wednesday imposed Stage I of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across Delhi-NCR after the capital's air quality slipped into the 'poor' category. Air quality is likely to remain in the 'poor' category until October 23, according to the forecast by the Air Quality Early Warning System. The outlook for the subsequent six days also indicates that air quality is likely to remain poor.

A ventilation index below 6,000 square metres per second, along with an average wind speed of less than 10 kmph, is unfavourable for the dispersion of pollutants, according to the system. The deterioration came a day after Vijayadashami, when Ravan effigies were burnt at several locations across the city. However, no direct link has been established between the celebrations and the deterioration

GHSPCA rescues four Palapitta birds during Dasara

Hyderabad: The animal welfare activists from the Greater Hyderabad Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (GHSPCA) rescued four Indian Roller birds (Palapitta) from various parts of the city during the Dasara festival.

The birds were recovered during targeted interventions following reports of illegal captivity. Two birds were rescued near the Tadbund Hanuman Temple, while one bird each was rescued from Nagole and Begum Bazar.

Pre-arrest police inquiry that cleared Mangaluru priest in Pocso case under scrutiny



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Two days after a church priest in Karnataka's Mangaluru was arrested over allegations of sexually abusing minor boys, a police inquiry conducted before his arrest has come under scrutiny because the report concluded that allegations against him could not be substantiated. The inquiry, conducted by the Mangaluru South police and detailed in a September 8 report, recorded the statements of the church administrator, the priest who succeeded Pinto, and Pinto himself. However, the report does not mention recording statements from the alleged victims or their parents.

According to the inquiry report accessed by The Indian Express, Pinto denied the allegations and claimed that some parents and youngsters were unhappy with the stricter disciplinary rules he had introduced at St Vincent Ferrer Church in Valencia, Mangaluru, including closing its gates at 7 pm. The church administrator also told the police that some people had expressed dissatisfaction with the priest's rules. The report concluded that the allegations of abuse and mistreatment of minors had not been established. The inquiry followed complaints child-protection authorities received from parents concerned about their children's safety. In a communication to the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Dakshina Kannada, the authorities said allegations had been made against Pinto and that several parents had raised concerns about their children's safety. The DCPU subsequently requested the Mangaluru South police to investigate the allegations and submit a report. In its communication after the police inquiry, the DCPU said the police reported that the allegations could not be substantiated. The report was subsequently submitted to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) on September 16. The findings are now under scrutiny following Pinto's arrest in the Pocso case, raising questions about the scope of the initial inquiry and the steps taken to verify the allegations.

According to sources, the children's parents had first approached the bishop with a written complaint in August, expecting the church authorities to take action. However, instead of immediately reporting the allegations to the police

or other competent authorities, the diocese conducted an internal inquiry, sources alleged. Following the inquiry, Pinto was placed on administrative leave and moved from the church associated with the diocese near the Karnataka-Kerala border. Sources alleged that he was subsequently moved between locations associated with the diocese, including an estate in Sakleshpur. Sources further alleged that the bishop was aware of the complaints from the initial stages and that the handling of the matter amounted to an attempt to shield the accused priest. Under the Pocso Act, suspected sexual offences against children must be reported to the authorities as soon as they come to light. However, the parents first approached the bishop, after which the church administration conducted an internal inquiry, allegedly delaying the filing of a police complaint. Sources also alleged that the families faced pressure for nearly two months not to pursue the matter, including appeals and threats made in the name of religion and community. The families' supporters later brought the matter to the attention of the Mangaluru-based NGO Odanadi. Stanly K V, the NGO's founder, said he approached the Mangaluru Police Commissioner and submitted a complaint seeking action, after which the FIR was registered and Pinto was arrested. Stanly said the families had mailed complaints to the Directorate of Child Protection in Bengaluru. According to him, the directorate sent an official communication to the DCPU, Dakshina Kannada, in September. He alleged that the subsequent inquiry involving the DCPU, the bishop's office and the local police did not result in timely action. Stanly has since submitted an additional complaint to the police commissioner, seeking to include the bishop in the FIR and to investigate the alleged delay by the church and government authorities. "The FIR mentions the period of sexual abuse as August 14 to October 15, but the families' accounts indicate that the incidents occurred before August 14, which they described as the last date on which the abuse took place. The priest had already been placed on administrative leave during the period mentioned in the FIR. We have sought clarification on these dates based on the children's accounts," he said.

Police to probe lapses in initial inquiry Sudheer Kumar Reddy, Police Commissioner, while speaking to The Indian Express, acknowledged lapses at the police station level in the initial inquiry, saying the inspector recorded the priest's statement but did not speak to the victims or their parents. The case has now been handed over to an assistant commissioner of police (ACP)-rank officer, who has been directed to inquire into the lapses in the initial investigation and submit a report, the commissioner said. The FIR currently names five victims. The commissioner said the police would reach out to others who may have been affected and record their statements. The commissioner also confirmed receiving an additional complaint from the NGO. "We have received an additional complaint seeking the inclusion of the bishop's name in the FIR and raising questions about the period of the alleged offences. We will examine these allegations as part of the ACP-level inquiry. If the findings warrant any changes to the FIR, the necessary action will be taken," Commissioner Sudheer Kumar Reddy said.

‘Fake Chorbagan videos from Bangladesh’: CM Suvendu Adhikari says those who shared them will be booked

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Tuesday said fake videos on the Chorbagan tragedy originated from Bangladesh and were shared on social media by a section of people in Bengal. He said those who circulated or endorsed such videos will be booked under non-bailable sections. Nineteen people died and 25 were injured in a stampede at Chorbagan Sarbojanin in North Kolkata on October 17 around 7.40 pm. The Chief Minister visited the families of the victims on Tuesday.

Later, speaking to mediapersons, he said: "Fake videos of the Chorbagan incident were being made viral on social media. This is mainly done from Bangladesh. From Cooch Behar to various parts of the state some people shared it. Some commented on it. Action will be taken against them. There are 135 such people. I have asked police to book those people in non-bailable sections." "I personally went to the hospital and the place of occurrence. Why spread fake videos?" said the CM. Chorbagan stampede, Chorbagan Durga Puja pandal incident, Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja, Kolkata Durga Puja crowd surge, Chorbagan pandal injuries, stampede-like situation in Kolkata, Calcutta Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata Police Durga Puja, Chorbagan Arob theme, Kolkata Durga Puja crowd control, Deshapriya Park pandal closure, Sreebhumi Durga Puja, Kalyani Durga Puja crowd (L-R) Relatives of deceased Siparna Poddar from Baidyabati, Hooghly at Calcutta Medical College and hospital and Injured Sayantika Ghosh, coming out from medical College and hospital (Express photo by Partha Paul)

Hours earlier, the Special Task Force of West Bengal Police arrested a man from Cooch Behar district for allegedly spreading misinformation on social media about the toll in the Chorbagan stampede. Responding to questions about the absence of CCTV footage at the spot where an announcement was made, Adhikari said he would not interfere with

CJP leaders Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka face fresh custody request by Delhi Police

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Wednesday sought a further three days of judicial custody for Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka in connection with the Jantar Mantar trespassing case. The two activists were brought to Mandir Marg Police Station for production before the Special Executive Magistrate (SEM) court after their previous judicial custody expired.

CJP Legal Affairs Head Ratna Singh also arrived at the police station ahead of the proceedings.

The hearing before the SEM court is underway, and the magistrate is yet to pronounce a decision on the Delhi Police's request for a further three days of judicial custody. Earlier in the day, the Delhi High Court allowed Das and Ranka to withdraw their plea seeking their release and challenging the SEM court's order extending their custody, without expressing any opinion on the merits of the matter. A single-judge Bench of Justice Subramonium Prasad had asked the counsel representing the two activists to consider withdrawing the petition and await the SEM court proceed-

ings before pursuing an appropriate legal remedy. The court observed that if the activists secured relief from the SEM court, continuing the proceedings before it would serve no purpose. The development comes after SEM Ritu Raj extended the judicial custody of the two CJP leaders until October 21 on Monday, observing that their conduct raised concerns about the likelihood of a breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquillity. In its order, the SEM court recorded that the two leaders had allegedly violated bonds furnished before the SEM, South-West District, on October 11 and subsequently committed a breach of peace in the present case. The magistrate also cited material placed on record by the investigating officer regarding the apprehension of a breach of peace and disturbance of public tranquillity. The order further directed the duo to furnish fresh sureties after an inquiry found the earlier ones unfit. Das and Ranka, along with CJP member Ajinkya Shinde, were among 14 people detained on October 13 after they allegedly entered Jantar Mantar through private premises and obstructed police personnel from discharging their official duties.

‘Not the time for politics’: TMC rebel amid Kolkata stampede blame game



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

As a political row erupted in West Bengal in the aftermath of the Kolkata stampede tragedy, with Opposition parties targeting the BJP government over the incident, rebel Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Ritabrata Banerjee criticised the Mamata-led TMC and the CPI(M) for politicising the incident, urging all parties to focus on helping those affected. "This is not a time to play any political blame game," Banerjee, the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, said, adding that he was ashamed of political parties that have adopted a combative attitude.

At least 19 people were killed, and around 25 were injured after a crowd surge at the Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal on Saturday evening amid heavy rain. CPI(M) leader Shatarup Ghosh blamed the government for the deaths, alleging a complete failure of crowd management. "In the first Durga Puja after the BJP government came to power, the festival was stained with blood. Due to the complete failure of crowd management, 19 people lost their lives," he said. Urging Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari to come forward, Ghosh said, "Who is responsible for this incident? This tragic outcome occurred because the police were not

used for their proper duties, but instead were deployed to suppress the Opposition or for other purposes. We demand that all the facts be brought to light without concealing any information." He further alleged that the police demolished a book stall in the early hours following the incident, describing the move as insensitive in the wake of the deaths. 'Complete failure of administration' MLA Kunal Ghosh from the Mamata Banerjee TMC faction termed the incident a "complete failure of the administration" and said the puja organisers should also be held accountable. He said the immediate priority was treatment of the injured and assistance to the victims' families. He called for the completion of post-mortem examinations, adequate medical care for the injured, and measures to ensure grieving families do not face inconvenience during funeral rites. Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge conveyed his condolences to the families of the deceased and demanded that the West Bengal government arrange prompt medical treatment, provide adequate compensation, and conduct a thorough investigation into the incident.

Let us work together: CMC Meanwhile, Adhikari urged parties not to politicise the incident. "In this atmosphere of mourning, I want us to work together," he said. Referring to past accidents and disasters, Adhikari said, "When incidents like the one at Majherhat happened, the incident at Taratala happened, and people were trampled to death in Panihati... and before the Puja, in the midst of the monsoon, 13 people died from electrocution. What did the then chief minister (Mamata Banerjee) do? There was a flash flood in north Bengal. Around 100 people died. At that time, she organised dandiya dance and carnival. All this must stop." Adhikari said he had met the families of the victims. "Tears came to my eyes when these families held my hand. I apologised. They too, in tears, said that they have faith in this government," he added.

Quota activist Jarange-Patil asks Shinde if he took Rs 500 cr from BJP to ‘silence’ him

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil caused a stir on Tuesday as he asked Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde whether he had taken Rs 500 crore from the BJP to "silence" him. "Whatever I heard apparently happened two and a half years ago. I have come to know from some leaders that Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde told the BJP leadership that they should pay Rs 500 crore to Jarange-Patil to silence him," the activist said at a Dussehra rally in Beed district. Jarange-Patil said he had learnt that Shinde had told the BJP leadership that the latter had paid the activist Rs 500 crore.

"I want to know from Eknath Shinde whether this is true. Has he paid me Rs 500 crore? It is claimed that he paid me Rs 500 crore through his son Shrikant Shinde. Rs 500 crore is not a small amount. This is a big conspiracy against me. Shinde should reply to my question either in today's Dussehra rally or by tomorrow," Jarange-Patil said. Jarange-Patil said he would reveal proof for the claim. "I have proof of this claim with me, and I can reveal it. This proof will shake the ground under your feet... I heard about this conspiracy during my hunger strike in Antarwali-Saraati," he added.

Jarange-Patil alleged that a plot was being hatched to



isolate the Maratha community, with deliberate attempts made to harass and inflict pain. "However, we are fighting firmly.

We are gradually marching towards victory. Those who go against the community will never be spared, and I will work to propel the community forward until my last breath," he said. Jarange-Patil also talked about the need to address the drought situation effectively. If a crisis has befallen the Maratha community, it must come together to combat the crisis, he said.

Priyank Kharge questions RSS over police permission for Karnataka march

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Bengaluru: Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), questioning whether the Police Department was subservient to the organisation. Reacting to a letter submitted by the RSS informing the police about its proposed march, Kharge said the organisation had provided information rather than formally seeking permission for the event. "The letter says that they are informing the police, not seeking permission. Let them seek permission. Is the Police Department their domestic servant?" he asked. Kharge also questioned RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's statements on changing the existing governments and politics, asking who had authorised him to speak about a change of regime and political matters.

"What regime change are they talking about? How can regime change happen? The Chief Election Commissioner is theirs, the EVMs are theirs, and the voter list is theirs. Can these be changed? Form 6 is theirs, and Form 7 is theirs. There is still no answer to the question: Why does the Chief Election Commissioner have judicial immunity?" he said, referring to Forms 6 and 7 associated with electoral rolls. "There is a conspiracy to ensure that they remain in power permanently. This has already been exposed. Isn't the fact that people are taking to the streets today evidence of this?" he said. He suggested that this was the reason some people were behaving with such confidence. Keeping up his attack on the organisation, he said: "Which evil force are we talking about? Who is the one developing links with Pakistan?" He also called for an examination of the organisation's history and questioned what protests it had undertaken in the past. Kharge further said that protests taking place in foreign countries should not be compared with those in India, as the issues involved were different. Citing France as an example, he said protests there were being held over price rise and education-related issues, whereas demonstrations in India were being organised against the Election Commission.

His remarks come amid a political controversy over the RSS's proposed march and the procedure for obtaining police permission. The issue has triggered a debate over the organisation's activities and the conditions applicable to public processions. Priyank Kharge on Tuesday urged the RSS to follow the prescribed procedure and obtain formal permission from the competent authorities before conducting route marches in the state on the occasion of Vijayadashami. The move has triggered a controversy. In a statement addressed to RSS volunteers, Kharge had said that merely informing the Home Department or asking it to cooperate and make necessary arrangements did not amount to obtaining permission. He urged the organisation to submit an application in accordance with the prescribed procedure applicable to all organisations and await formal approval from the competent authorities. Kharge also referred to the RSS Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha Annual Report 2025-26, saying that the organisation had conducted 562



route marches across Karnataka involving 2,21,963 uniformed participants.

He said that if lakhs of RSS volunteers intended to march through the streets of Karnataka on a single day at the same time, the Police Department would have to make considerable preparations. These arrangements would include the deployment of police personnel, transportation, food, traffic management, security and other logistical requirements, Kharge added. Emphasising the need for proper planning, the Karnataka Minister noted that such large-scale events required manpower and public resources.

Niranjan Reddy challenges Congress to lift Srisaillam water for PRLIS

Hyderabad: BRS leader and former Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy accepted Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao's challenge, asking the State government to immediately release funds. He challenged the ruling Congress to lift available water from the Srisaillam reservoir and address farmers' problems under the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS).

In a statement, Niranjan Reddy said the flow of water from Narlapur reservoir to Yellur reservoir was made possible by decisions taken during the previous BRS government. He said the outlet inaugurated by Jupally Krishna Rao was constructed at his request to the then Chief Minister K Chandrashekhkar Rao.

He stated that interlinking Narlapur with Yellur, Yedula with Buddaram and Vattam reservoir with the Kalwakurthy Lift Irrigation Scheme canal was intended to overcome the limitations of canals built with inadequate carrying capacity and ensure water supply to farmers. Pointing out that water was still available in the Srisaillam reservoir, the former Minister challenged the government to remove the earth obstructing Package-3 and allow water to flow.

Marco Rubio calls UN experts' criticism of India a domestic matter



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

New Delhi: Labelling 'experts' from the United Nations (UN) as an "oxymoron", US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday called the recent demonstrations by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and opposition parties against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar as India's "domestic matter". Currently visiting India, Rubio was asked in Mumbai about the remarks made by UN 'experts' on the CJP protests and the subsequent response by the law enforcement agencies. "Oh, UN experts, my favourite. The UN experts are the oxymoron," said Rubio. The US Secretary of State then went on to say that he would restrain from making any comment on India's domestic political matters. "It is a domestic political matter. I am not going to comment on it. This is a democracy, they have elections here. I am

not going to opine on their domestic, political matters. We have protests every day in US," Rubio told reporters before leaving for Jamnagar.

The so-called 'UN experts' had on Tuesday called on Indian authorities to respect, protect and fulfil the right to peacefully protest, and ensure justice for human rights violations "reported during these and previous protests". Earlier in the day, India told the UN General Assembly that it is a "vibrant democracy anchored in the rule of law" and Article 21 of its Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Speaking at the General Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with humanitarian affairs, Barkha Tamrakar, a Deputy Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry's UN Economic Social Division, said that while it engages with international human rights organisations, India has said it opposes the stealth use of the concept of human rights as political tool that uses unverified allegations to selectively target countries. "India firmly opposes any attempt to convert unverified allegations, incomplete statistics or a report that contains no India country[-specific] observation into a negative characterisation of the world's largest democracy", said Tamrakar. At the same time, "India remains prepared to clarify specific, properly documented cases through established channels", she said. In engaging with international human rights mechanisms, India's ground rule is that it "must be based on dialogue, consultation, cooperation with non-selectivity and transparency as guiding principles", she said. "Human rights' must not be used as an instrument of political pressure or selective country targeting", she said.

Rupee gains 48 paise to close at six-week high of 94.43



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Mumbai: The rupee surged 48 paise to close at a six-week high of 94.43 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, supported by foreign currency inflows linked to Reliance Industries' Jio Platforms IPO and RBI intervention to contain dollar demand. However, forex market analysts said weak domestic equity markets and higher crude oil prices were putting pressure on the rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.78 against the dollar. During intraday trade, it touched a high of 94.41 and a low of 94.82 against the US currency. It eventually settled at 94.43 (provisional), up 48 paise from its previous close. The Indian currency last recorded a similar closing level on September 4. On Monday, the rupee settled 2 paise lower at 94.91 against the US dollar. Forex markets were closed on Tuesday on account of Dussehra.

"The rupee rose to a six-week high on IPO-driven foreign inflows and a relatively weak US dollar. However, weak domestic markets and elevated crude oil prices capped sharp gains," said Anuj Choudhary, research analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. He added that the rupee was expected to trade with a positive bias amid overall weakness in the

dollar and softening US Treasury yields. "The USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 94.20 to Rs 94.80." According to analysts, a stronger rupee can ease imported inflation and reduce currency-related costs for companies importing crude oil, electronics and other raw materials. It may also benefit sectors such as aviation and oil marketing, although the actual impact depends on companies' hedging positions and pricing.

Foreign investors participating in large IPOs typically sell dollars to acquire rupees, increasing dollar supply in the domestic foreign exchange market. The RBI has also supported the currency through measures aimed at reducing spot-market dollar demand from oil companies and managing excessive exchange-rate volatility," said Gaurav Garg, head of research at brokerage platform Lemonn. However, the recovery faces significant challenges, as Brent crude prices climbed above USD 110 per barrel amid renewed tensions in the Middle East and concerns over potential supply disruptions, he added. Going forward, the sustainability of the rupee's recovery will depend on the continuation of IPO-related inflows, RBI intervention, crude oil prices, foreign portfolio flows and movements in the US dollar, Garg said.

The Rs 30,213-crore public offering of Jio Platforms opened for subscription on Wednesday and will close on October 23. The issue, with a price band of Rs 1,065 to Rs 1,119 per share, was fully subscribed within 100 minutes of opening, making it the fastest-ever subscribed IPO, according to the report. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 101.59. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.99 per cent higher at USD 110.96 per barrel in futures trade. On the domestic equity market, the Sensex declined 143.21 points to settle at 73,709.69, while the Nifty fell 77.60 points to close at 22,811.35. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sold equities worth Rs 1,148.64 crore on a net basis on Monday, according to exchange data.

Trump envoy asks Putin to resume three-way Ukraine peace talks, secures release of US citizen

ST PETERSBURG, Russia GNS News Agency, Oct 22, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff on Wednesday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to consider resuming US-mediated peace talks with Ukraine and to review new ideas on ending the war amid Washington's latest push to stop Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War Two. The talks in a grand imperial palace in St Petersburg, the ninth time that Witkoff has met Putin in person, began with a goodwill gesture from Russia - the release of Stephen Hubbard, a retired US school teacher held in Russia.

Get a look at the day ahead in European and global markets with the Morning Bid Europe newsletter. Sign up here. Putin also offered to help US President Donald Trump in dealing with Iran, saying Russia had a decades-long relationship with Tehran which it has repeatedly offered to leverage to address US concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. Russia could also supply large quantities of fertiliser to the United States to help US farmers, the Russian president told Witkoff, saying he wanted to discuss a potential meeting in China next month with Trump which the Kremlin has suggested could also include Chinese President Xi Jinping. The encounter comes amid concerns in Kyiv and among its allies that the United States is backing away from Ukraine, at times holding back real-time intelligence on Russian attacks and hobbling Ukraine's military communications. The latest talks also come more than two years since Trump promised in his successful election campaign to end the Ukraine war within 24 hours.

"One thing that I hope to accomplish today is to have some good conversation between us about the resumption potentially of bilateral talks between Ukraine and Russia and the United States," Witkoff told Putin. "Even if we don't have a resolution today, if we just talk about and sort of consider what that next step might be I think that would be important and the world is waiting to hear that". The last US-mediated peace talks took place in February before the United States and Israel launched a war against Iran. Ukraine and Russia remain far apart when it comes to the terms of any possible peace deal, but Trump has recently intensified pressure on Ukraine to strike some kind of a deal. He said on Tuesday it was time for Ukraine to end the war or face "a very bad thing."

'NEW IDEAS' Putin, who has shown few signs of compromising on his central war aims, which include full Russian control of the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine and no NATO membership for Kyiv, received Witkoff in the Constantine Palace, a grand imperial edifice in what is the Kremlin chief's home city.

Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's special investment envoy, was



also present at the meeting with Witkoff as both sides talked up the potential of post-war Russia-US economic cooperation. Item 1 of 5 Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with US special envoy Steve Witkoff during a meeting at the Constantine Palace in Saint Petersburg, Russia, October 21, 2026. Sputnik/Gavril Grigorov/Pool via Witkoff flew into Russia's second city a day after conducting talks in Oslo with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the leaders of Finland and Norway and European and NATO representatives. Witkoff said he would brief Putin on the Oslo talks which he described as productive and said had been characterised by "some degree of momentum."

He said he had brought some documents with him containing various ideas for a potential peace deal for Putin to review, and that Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, also wanted to convey some ideas to Putin and would shortly join the meeting remotely by phone. A US official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Ukraine had brought new ideas and proposals to the Oslo talks, which had made "meaningful progress" toward a coordinated approach to engaging with Russia. The official said the talks covered "key elements of a comprehensive peace framework," including security guarantees for Ukraine, a post-war economic plan and a broader European security architecture. Zelenskiy said he hoped to discuss key issues on how to end the war during a trilateral meeting with Putin and Trump. The Kremlin has repeatedly said that any Putin-Zelenskiy meeting would need to be painstakingly prepared in advance by aides to make it worthwhile. FRAYING ?US-UKRAINE TIES US- Ukraine ties have deteriorated ?sharply since Trump announced a diesel export deal with Russia earlier this month to help lower prices in the United States. High fuel costs since he launched strikes on Iran have hurt his Republicans ahead of November legislative elections.

Who is Stephen Hubbard, the US citizen released by Russia?

President Vladimir Putin announced the release of American citizen Stephen Hubbard from Russian detention on Wednesday, at the start of talks with US special envoy Steve Witkoff. Here are details of Hubbard's case: The Misinformation Monitor newsletter rounds up international misinformation narratives, with a "Real or Fake?" quiz in every edition. Sign up here.

WHO ?IS STEPHEN HUBBARD?

Hubbard, 74, a retired schoolteacher, grew up in Big Rapids, Michigan, and served in the US Air Force and National Guard, according to military records cited by the New York Times. He earned a master's degree in English and lived in Japan for 25 years where he taught English before moving to Cyprus and then, in 2014, to Izium in eastern Ukraine with a Ukrainian partner, according to his sister, Patricia Hubbard Fox. Fox told Reuters in 2024 that Hubbard subsisted on a pension of about \$300 a month and had few connections with local people. The siblings last spoke in September 2021.

HOW WAS HE CAPTURED?

Russia launched its full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022 and captured Izium two months later. Ukrainian forces retook the city in September 2022, but Hubbard was already in Russian custody by then. Russian state media said Hubbard had been detained in April 2022 and alleged he had been manning a Ukrainian military checkpoint. Reuters could not independently establish the circumstances of his capture. Fox said she recognised her brother in a YouTube video showing a man being questioned about

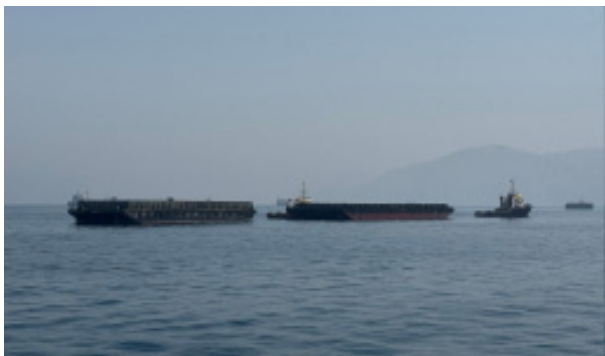
his views on Putin and the war. Another video showed him with his hands bound, being struck with a sandal. Reuters could not verify when or where the videos were recorded.

WHY WAS HE IMPRISONED?

Following a closed trial, a Moscow court convicted Hubbard of being a mercenary in October 2024 and sentenced him to six years and 10 months in prison. Prosecutors said Hubbard had joined a Ukrainian territorial defence unit, received training, weapons and ammunition, and was promised \$1,000 a month. Russian state media said he had pleaded guilty to the charges he faced. Fox questioned the reported confession, "however, saying Hubbard held pro-Russian views and was unlikely to have taken up arms in his seventies. In June 2025 that Hubbard had told him the charges against him were false and that he was not in any combat or military unit. He cited Hubbard as telling him Russian soldiers had simply grabbed him from his house.

WHAT IS HUBBARD'S CURRENT STATUS?

In January 2025, Washington designated Hubbard as wrongfully detained, enabling the US government to pursue negotiations for his release. The State Department has said Russia refused to grant US officials consular access. The New York Times reported in February 2025 that Hubbard had been moved through at least five Russian detention centres before his trial. His lawyer said Hubbard's legal team found out only in April 2025 that he was being held in a facility in the Mordovia region, east of Moscow.



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Tehran: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said two "violating" oil tankers caught fire on Tuesday after hitting naval mines laid by its naval forces in the Strait of Hormuz, as its Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the country will not let any strike against it go unanswered. In a statement published on its official news outlet Sepah News, the IRGC said the oil tankers sought to cross the strait through the "illegal" route south of the waterway when they collided with the mines, warning that attempting to cross the mined path in the strait is "illegal" and will result only in the burning of the "violators' assets."

Private credit faces deployment squeeze as fundraising hits record

GNS News Agency, Oct 22 Private credit direct lenders are raising record sums even as deal activity slows and borrowers return to the banking system's syndicated loan market, increasing pressure to deploy capital into a shrinking pool of attractive opportunities. Direct-lending funds raised \$129.15 billion in the first nine months of 2026, up 35% from a year earlier and the highest nine-month total in Preqin data going back to 2016.

Jumpstart your morning with the latest legal news delivered straight to your inbox from The Daily Docket newsletter. Sign up here. Estimated third-quarter lending volume, meanwhile, fell 28% year on year to \$49.77 billion, according to PitchBook/LCD. "The fundraising-deployment mismatch increases pressure to put money to work," said Sunaina Sinha of Haldea, global head of private capital advisory at Raymond James. She said the mismatch reflected a cyclical shortage of attractively priced deals, compounded by competition from the syndicated market, rather than a structural shortage of borrowers. The divergence is raising questions about how aggressively private-credit managers will compete to deploy capital. Sinha Haldea said plentiful capital and scarce deals could create pressure to concede on spreads, leverage or documentation. Private credit gained market share in recent years as borrowers turned to direct lenders for financing that could often be arranged with greater certainty and flexibility than loans distributed through the syndicated market. That advantage became particularly important when public leveraged-finance markets were volatile. In 2022 and 2023, more loans migrated from the broadly syndicated market into direct lending than moved in the opposite direction, PitchBook/LCD data showed.



That balance has shifted this year. Some \$16.39 billion of direct-lending loans were refinanced in the broadly syndicated market in the third quarter, compared with just \$2.60 billion of syndicated loans moving into direct lending. Tarek Omar, chief investment officer of Royce Stone Capital, said borrowers able to access both markets would naturally gravitate towards cheaper financing once fees and refinancing costs were taken into account. "If the borrowers with more alternatives repay, those with fewer alternatives become a greater share of the loans remaining," Omar said. That does not necessarily mean the borrowers remaining in private credit are weaker credits, since smaller companies may stay with direct lenders because syndicated financing does not suit their funding needs. "The real test of discipline is whether they are willing to leave money undeployed," Sinha Haldea said.

Elon Musk announces plan to distribute SpaceX shares to American children

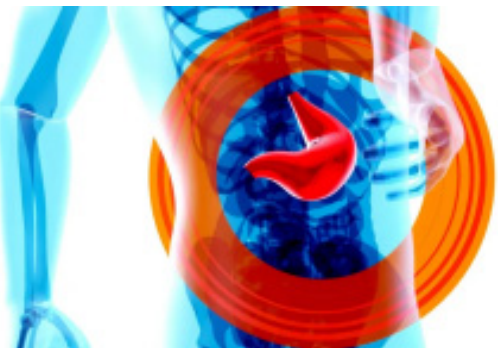
New Delhi: Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk on Monday said he plans to give one SpaceX share to every child in the United States next year. In a post on the social media platform X, the SpaceX chief executive officer described the move as the first of many such initiatives.

"Next year, I will give one of my SpaceX shares to every kid in America. This will be the first of many," Musk wrote. The announcement comes as Musk remains the largest shareholder in the private aerospace and satellite company. According to a recent regulatory filing, Musk held a 48.4 per cent stake in SpaceX as of June 30. The filing showed that Musk owned approximately 6.42 billion shares in SpaceX. His holdings included 849.5 million Class A shares and 3.92 billion Class B shares held through trusts for which he serves as trustee. In addition, Musk directly owned about 1.30 billion restricted Class B shares and had rights tied to stock options covering another 350 million Class B shares. Musk did not provide details on how the proposed share distribution would be implemented, including the eligibility criteria, timing, regulatory approvals or whether the shares would be transferred directly to recipi-



ents or through a trust structure. SpaceX is one of the world's most valuable private companies, with operations spanning commercial launch services, satellite internet through Starlink and human spaceflight missions. Meanwhile, last week, Musk unveiled a new version of the Roadster sports car, showcasing a prototype that briefly lifted off the ground during a demonstration at a SpaceX facility in Texas. A social media post shared by Musk on X highlighted the demonstration,

Hepatitis C cure in 8 weeks, not 12: Indian trial cuts cost by a third



Hepatitis C, a potentially serious but curable viral infection of the liver, often goes undetected for years, silently damaging the organ, and potentially leading to liver scarring or cirrhosis and liver cancer. In India, nearly one in every 200 people is infected with the virus. Now, an Indian study, published recently in The Lancet, offers hope of making treatment simpler and cheaper, finding that an eight-week course of antiviral drugs can cure hepatitis C as effectively as the standard 12-week regimen in patients without cirrhosis.

A breakthrough in treatment came nearly a decade ago, when new drugs made it possible to cure most patients with few side-effects. One widely used treatment combines sofosbuvir and velpatasvir, taken for 12 weeks. In India, the course costs around Rs 15,000, though it is considerably more expensive in several other countries. Cost apart, ensuring that patients complete the full course remains a challenge. A clinical trial by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in association with public health institutions like AIIMS, Delhi, suggests that treatment can be shortened to eight weeks for patients without cirrhosis, without compromising cure rates. This could reduce costs, ease the burden on patients and help public health programmes treat more people with the same resources. The multicentre RESOLVE trial enrolled 880 patients without cirrhosis at five public hospitals: two each in Lucknow and New Delhi, and one in Varanasi. Half received sofosbuvir-velpatasvir for eight weeks and the other half for the standard 12 weeks. Among patients who completed treatment, cure rates were nearly identical: 98.8% in the eight-week group and 99% in the 12-week group.

"Statistical analysis confirmed that the shorter regimen was non-inferior to the standard treatment. In simple terms, this means the eight-week course was not less effective than the 12-week course, according to a pre-specified statistical margin. The trial was prompted by smaller observational studies suggesting that eight weeks of treatment might be sufficient. A randomised controlled trial was needed to establish this more definitively," Dr Rakesh Aggarwal, lead study author and Chair for Disease Elimination, ICMR, told s:What could this mean for patients and public health?Reducing treatment from 12 to eight weeks could cut drug costs by a third. At current market prices, this amounts to a saving of about Rs 5,000 per patient. The ac-

tual savings under the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme may differ because government procurement prices are not publicly available to us. A shorter course could also mean fewer hospital visits, less time away from work and better treatment completion. Experience with shorter treatment regimens for tuberculosis and leprosy suggests that reducing treatment duration can improve adherence, although this remains an expected benefit of the eight-week hepatitis C regimen rather than a finding established by this trial. The findings are relevant to a large proportion of the more than 50 million people worldwide, including nearly six million in India, who need treatment for hepatitis C but have not yet developed cirrhosis. If adopted by public health programmes, the shorter regimen could allow more patients to be treated within existing budgets, helping India move closer to eliminating hepatitis C as a public health problem.

Who can receive the shorter treatment?

The findings apply to patients without cirrhosis. The trial excluded people with cirrhosis because their antiviral treatment is more challenging: they generally require longer treatment, and their reduced liver reserve makes treatment failure potentially more dangerous. Studying patients without cirrhosis first also ensured that those not cured by the shorter course could receive the standard 12-week treatment. The trial population was broadly representative of patients treated in Indian hospitals, although people with certain conditions, including HIV co-infection and intravenous drug use, were excluded. Such groups account for a minority of India's hepatitis C burden. In clinical practice, treatment decisions for people with additional conditions should be individualised. We see no clear reason why people who use drugs should not receive the shorter regimen, while a 12-week course may remain preferable for those with HIV co-infection. What happens next?

The study's main limitation is that it did not include patients with cirrhosis. National and international policymakers will need to review the evidence before deciding whether to recommend the shorter regimen more widely. Pharmaceutical companies would generally need to seek regulatory approval to change the authorised treatment duration, but may have limited commercial incentives to do so. Public health programmes and physicians sometimes adopt evidence-based regimens off-label, as has happened with single-dose HPV vaccination and fractional-dose injectable polio vaccination in India. The team is now preparing to test a shorter regimen in patients with cirrhosis. With ICMR funding approved and the protocol ready, the study is awaiting completion of regulatory and logistical arrangements. Because these patients usually receive 24 weeks of treatment, the new trial will assess whether 12 weeks is as effective as the standard 24 weeks. An eight-week course may be too short for this group. The eight-week regimen therefore offers a promising way to simplify hepatitis C treatment for patients without cirrhosis. Further research will determine whether treatment can also be shortened for those with more advanced liver disease.

Counting calories on your own is dangerous and can make you sick



Whether you're trying to gain or lose weight, most experts recommend practising calorie counting. However, if not done properly, it can have adverse effects on your body and mind. Calorie counting is not just about numbers – it's about understanding your body's unique needs. Everyone wants to be in shape. If you ask a random person on the street whether they'd rather be skinny, obese, or fit, you can probably guess their answer.

With health taking priority, people are more mindful of what they eat, how they eat, and how much they consume. We all know someone who has downloaded an app to track their daily calorie intake, meticulously logging every meal and snack. It feels like a step towards a healthier lifestyle. But what if this seemingly harmless habit is actually doing more harm than good? Without proper guidance, obsessing over calorie counts can lead to serious physical

and mental health problems. What is calorie counting?

Deepali Sharma, clinical nutritionist at the CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, explains, "Calorie counting is a dietary method that helps individuals track their daily calorie intake to achieve specific health or fitness goals, such as weight loss, weight gain, or maintaining a healthy weight." "By recording the calories consumed from all foods and beverages throughout the day, individuals can assess their intake relative to their daily energy expenditure. This approach allows for informed adjustments in eating habits, supporting the achievement of desired health outcomes," she adds. Don't take it into your own hands. While calorie counting can be an effective way to monitor your weight,

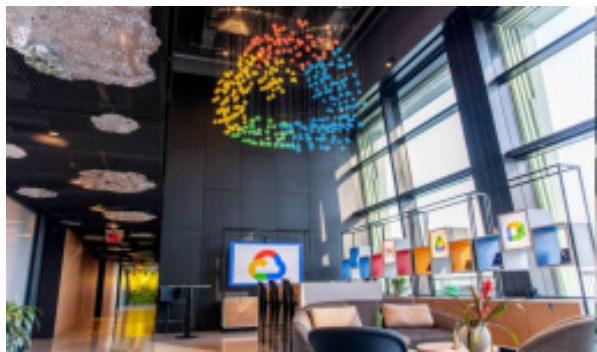
it's also tricky. Experts always advise doing it under professional supervision because, without guidance, it can lead to health issues. Each body is unique, with different nutritional needs, so a "one-size-fits-all" diet plan may not work for everyone. These days, it's easy to get influenced by videos from social media influencers promoting quick-fix weight gain or weight-loss solutions. But real, sustainable results aren't achieved through shortcuts. This is where expert advice comes in handy. Mumbai-based ayurveda and nutrition consultant Dr Prachi Mhaskar tells us about the risks of unsupervised calorie counting. According to her, it can lead to: Insufficient nutrient intake from focusing only on calorie numbe Incorrect calorie targets that don't match your body's need Development of unhealthy relationships with food Mental stress and anxiety around eating Physical health issues from under- or overeating Missing out on essential nutrients by focusing solely on calorie counts Dr Shweta Jaiswal.

Google Cloud outage in London disrupts Revolut, other online services

New Delhi: Google Cloud services in London experienced network disruptions on Tuesday following a power-related incident, affecting multiple services and prompting reports of outages across several online platforms, including British digital banking app Revolut. Google confirmed that multiple services were experiencing issues in its Europe-west2 region, which is based in London. The company said the disruption began around 7 am British Summer Time (BST) and was linked to a power event affecting its Europe-west2-b zone.

In an update on its Cloud Status page, Google said the power incident had been mitigated, adding that partial recovery of infrastructure services was expected within 30 minutes, followed by the restoration of remaining services. However, the company said its engineering team was continuing to investigate the broader disruption and apologised to affected customers. The outage triggered reports of service disruptions across several platforms. Revolut, the UK-based online banking company, reported issues affecting multiple services, with thousands of customers reporting problems accessing its services.

Revolut said customers' money and data remained safe and that it had been working to resolve the issue since it was identified in the morning. The company also apologised to customers for the inconvenience caused. Halifax also acknowledged reports of problems with its mobile application and website. In a response to a customer on social media platform X, the bank said it was aware that some customers were experiencing difficulties and was working to re-



store normal services. It advised customers that they could still contact the bank by telephone if required. Halifax did not confirm whether its service disruption was directly linked to the Google Cloud incident. UK-based budgeting application Emma also reported an outage, attributing it to the Google Cloud disruption affecting services in London since 7 am. The company said the issue was technical rather than security-related and that it was monitoring the situation, promising to provide updates once its application was operational again. Website monitoring platform Downtidetector also recorded an increase in user-reported problems across several websites and online services on Tuesday morning. However, it was not immediately clear whether all the affected platforms relied on Google Cloud infrastructure or whether their reported issues were directly connected to the incident.

Do you really need two foundations for combination skin?



Struggling to find the perfect foundation for your combination skin? You might want to consider using separate products for different areas. Life would be much simpler if there were only two skin types: dry and oily. But, of course, it couldn't be that easy—enter combination skin. People with this skin type face unique challenges because they can't simply grab a product and expect it to work seamlessly. The struggle intensifies when choosing a foundation. Formulas designed for dry skin leave them with an oily shine, while options for oily skin make dry areas look patchy and uneven. So, does this mean people with combination skin need two different foundations to tackle different parts of their face? Or is there a way to strike the perfect balance?

Understanding combination skin "Combination skin is characterised by both oily and dry areas on the face. Typically, the T-zone (forehead, nose, and chin) tends to be oily, while the cheeks remain dry. This imbalance can make skincare and makeup application a bit tricky," Dr Shifa Yadav, consultant, dermatology and cosmetology, Artemis Hospitals, Gurugram, tells India Today. Further, Dr DM Mahajan, senior consultant, dermatology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, explains that this skin type occurs due to varying concentrations of oil-producing sebaceous glands across the face, with more active glands in the T-zone. The skin's condition can also fluctuate based on seasonal changes, hormones, and stress levels.

"What makes combination skin unique is this dual nature—some areas might be prone to shine and breakouts, while others might experience flakiness or tightness. This skin type is actually quite common, affecting a large percentage of people, particularly during their younger years. It requires a balanced approach to skincare since different areas of the face have different needs," he adds. Meanwhile, Megha, a Karnal-based makeup artist, shares that it's quite easy to figure out if you have combination skin. She explains, "To determine if you have combina-

tion skin, cleanse your face and leave it bare for about an hour. If your T-zone becomes oily while your cheeks stay dry or comfortable, you likely have combination skin." You can also use blotting paper to understand your skin type. Press blotting papers on different areas of your face—if only the T-zone shows significant oil transfer while other areas show little to none, that's a strong indicator. Finding the right foundation for combination skin is no cakewalk. People with combination skin face several challenges in their skincare and makeup routines. The main difficulty lies in finding products that can effectively address both oily and dry areas without aggravating either condition. They often struggle with controlling the shine in the T-zone while preventing the dry areas from becoming flakier. Seasonal changes can exacerbate these issues, making skin more unpredictable. Applying makeup evenly can be particularly challenging, as products may look different on various areas of the face—appearing cakey on dry patches while sliding off oily zones. Products that work well on one area might irritate another, making it difficult to maintain a consistent skincare routine. Achieving the perfect base Dr Yadav mentions that while it's not necessary for people with combination skin to use two different foundations, you can consider using a lighter, oil-free formula for the oily T-zone and a more hydrating formula for the dry cheeks. However, many people find a single, well-balanced foundation to be sufficient. Dr Mahajan agrees that some people with combination skin find it helpful to use different formulations for different areas. However, a more practical approach is finding one versatile foundation and adjusting the application technique and preparation of different areas.

He shares that the key lies in proper skincare and priming before foundation application, suggesting the use of a mattifying primer on the T-zone and a hydrating primer on drier areas.

What's the right choice? "A satin finish foundation is often ideal as it offers a balanced look without being too matte or too dewy. Those with combination skin should look for a lightweight, hydrating foundation that controls oil without over-drying, helping to create a smooth, natural finish," says Megha. She adds that medium coverage is a good choice as it evens out the skin tone while allowing for a natural look. It avoids the heavy feel of full coverage, which can emphasise oiliness or dryness, and can be built up as needed. The makeup artist further states, "For a flawless finish, try using a damp sponge or a foundation brush. Light application across the T-zone with a bit more on drier areas ensures even coverage, avoiding an overly matte or shiny look." The application technique also matters.

The Problem in Your Plate: Why an Indian home-cooked meal is not always healthy



Just because food is homemade doesn't mean it's automatically healthy. Contrary to popular belief, home-cooked meals aren't always nutritious and can work against your health goals. "Why are you always eating out? It's unhealthy!" If you grew up in an Indian household, chances are you've heard your parents say this every time you head out for a meal. Home-cooked food, indeed, is considered healthier. You know it is hygienic; you are sure of the quality of ingredients going in; you know there is no addition of harmful preservatives. Not to forget, there's that amount of love that goes in. Research supports this too. "Compared to pre-prepared meals, fully and partly home-cooked meals in diverse families with young children are more likely to include nutritious ingredients," states a 2019 study on the nutritional benefits of home-cooked food.

Health experts also highly recommend eating homemade meals over ordering from outside, especially now, with a plethora of restaurant options and the convenience of food delivery. When food is just a few clicks away from your doorstep, who wants to take time out of an already- hectic schedule to cook a meal in the kitchen? But health experts urge you to resist that temptation of eating out – for all the right reasons. "Home-cooked meals are often healthier because you control the quality of ingredients, portion sizes, and cooking methods. Restaurants and outside vendors may use excessive amounts of oil, salt, and preservatives to enhance flavour and increase shelf life, which can contribute to various health issues like obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. Furthermore, home-cooked food is usually fresher, and you can ensure better hygiene standards, which reduces the risk of foodborne illnesses," says Priya Paliwal, chief dietitian at Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, Delhi. However, this does not mean you can eat anything and everything just because it is cooked at home. Contrary to popular belief, home food is not always healthy.

What can go wrong with home food? A lot.

To make food tastier, many of us tend to go extra with oil, butter, sugar, or spices. You know how that extra spoonful of ghee or butter is often an Indian mum's ultimate love language. Similarly, having deep-fried dishes (even if cooked at home) daily can lead to health issues. "Home food is unhealthy when there is excessive use of oil, sugar, and salt. Many people now also use several processed items like ginger-garlic paste or tomato puree for food preparations, which often contain harmful preservatives and food colours,"

says dietitian Vidhi Chawla, founder of Fisico Diet and Aesthetic clinic in Delhi. "Cooking food with too much oil, sugar, or salt can cause heart problems, diabetes, or hypertension. Deep-frying or overcooking vegetables destroys the nutrients present in them," adds Parmeet Kaur, chief nutritionist and dietitian at Marengo Asia Hospital, Gurugram. Not just deep-frying but overcooking is also a problem. "Overcooking vegetables can strip them of essential nutrients. Also, avoid cooking on a high flame," says Vidhi.

Portion size is another big issue that can make home-cooked food work against your health goals. Excess calorie intake, even from home-prepared food, can lead to weight gain, metabolic changes, digestive issues, and an increased risk of chronic diseases. "Just because food is made at home doesn't mean it should be consumed in large quantities," says Paliwal. Whether it is kheer, aloo-poori, biryani, sambar rice, or a regular roti with sabzi, don't regularly indulge in overeating. Now comes the most troublesome and common bit: skipping food groups. The different food groups include fruits, vegetables, grains, protein sources (such as meat, legumes, and nuts), dairy, and fats and oils. These provide essential nutrients for a balanced diet. If a plate full of rice and rajma (or any lentil/curry) is what your lunches look like, you are doing it horribly wrong. Where's the salad for fibre? Or the raita as a probiotic? Or the green chutney for micronutrients? "A plate that consists mainly of one or two food groups, such as three rotis with dal or just rajma and rice, lacks variety and can lead to nutritional deficiencies. Meals should ideally consist of a balance between carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and fibre," says dietitian Paliwal. A primary focus on rice/roti is another issue that promotes nutritional imbalance.

Even though Indian food culture is rich across regions and promotes balanced meals – like roti/rice, dal, sabzi, raita, and pickle for lunch in the North, or steamed rice, sambar, rasam, avial (mixed vegetable curry), curd, and papad in the South – busier lifestyles have turned elaborate traditional everyday meals into quick lunches, often missing many food groups. According to ICMR's dietary guidelines, a healthy meal includes generous amounts of vegetables, adequate whole grains and pulses or beans, modest portions of nuts or seeds, complemented by fruits and plain fermented yogurt or curd. It should be free of added sugars or contain minimal amounts and be seasoned with minimal oil/fats and salt for taste. This is what your daily food intake should roughly look like:

What are the pros and cons of the Employment-Linked Incentive scheme? | Explained



The story so far: The Union Cabinet approved an Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme with an outlay of ₹99,446 crore. The scheme, a promise made in the 2024-25 budget, is aimed at creating employment, particularly in the manufacturing sector. It is a part of the Prime Minister's package of five schemes to facilitate employment such as internships with big companies and measures to improve skills of the youth.

What are the key provisions?

The ELI scheme, according to the Labour Ministry, incentivises creation of more than 3.5 crore jobs over a period of two years. The Centre expects 1.92 crore newly employed people to get the benefit of the scheme, which comes into operation from August 1, 2025 and ends on July 31, 2027. The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will implement the scheme. Newly recruited employees, with salaries up to ₹1 lakh, will get a one-month EPF wage up to ₹15,000 in two installments. The EPFO will pay the first instalment after six months of service and the second instalment after 12 months of service — both as direct bank transfer. A portion of the incentive will be kept in "a savings instrument of deposit account for a fixed period and can be withdrawn by the employee at a later date". The establishments, registered with EPFO, will get up to ₹3,000 per month, for two years, "for each additional employee with sustained employment for at least six months". The Centre adds that for the manufacturing sector, incentives will be extended to third and fourth years as well.

How have employers responded?

Employers have welcomed the scheme, with caveats. Former Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Subhrakant Panda said that ELI is a "laudable initiative". It will drive employment, especially in

the manufacturing sector, through an innovative approach which combines support for those joining the workforce for the first time with incentives for creating sustained employment, he added. CII's office-bearer Sachit Jain said the ELI scheme has the potential to reshape India's employment landscape and boost labour-intensive sectors. The Sangh Parivar-backed Laghu Udyog Bharati pointed out that the focus of the scheme must be directed towards micro, small manufacturing units and allied service sectors. "We also urge that units with less than 20 employees, which form the majority, are not left behind. These units must be included under the scheme benefits," it demanded in a statement. The founder of the Association of Indian Entrepreneurs, K.E. Raghunathan, told The Hindu that the scheme must be repositioned under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with a structured reimbursement model based on actual payroll data addition. "For every new employee a specific percentage of the salary must be paid to the employee and employer as a subsidy directly on a monthly basis, as long as the employee remains in service. Make it simple and ensure a wider coverage," he suggested.

What about trade unions?

Barring the RSS-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), all 10 central trade unions have questioned the scheme. The BMS has welcomed the ELI scheme with a rider that the government must expand the social security base and improve the quality of employment. Other unions fear that workers' money will be used to incentivise employers. Citing the fate of the Production-Linked Incentive of 2020, wherein certain sectors were given sops by the Centre to create jobs, but the money had gone into the pockets of big companies. They argued that the EPFO had to conduct a probe and ban certain companies after finding the scheme was misused for employers' benefits.

What are some of the concerns?

There are concerns on the role of the EPFO in the scheme. As EPFO is only a custodian of savings of employees, unions are asking how it can act as an agency to implement the scheme. As the EPFO has no government funds in its books, there are doubts over the reimbursement of the money which could go to the employer or a newly recruited employee. As EPFO is not an agency with the responsibility of creating jobs, there are demands to create a separate agency to implement the scheme. Industry experts are also questioning why the government is not addressing the slowdown in the economy, and not taking steps to improve the purchasing power of workers.

No more back benchers: A Malayalam film prompts new seating arrangement in Kerala classrooms

Vinesh Viswanath did not expect his directorial debut, Sthanarthi Sreekuttan, to initiate a revolution. The climax of the heart-warming, coming-of-age Malayalam film about an upper primary school in Thiruvananthapuram, shows how a class does away with the conventional row-based seating arrangement in favour of a semi-circle arrangement with the teacher in the centre. And this has been adopted by several schools in Kerala, after the film released on the OTT platform, Saina Play, last month.

"At least six schools have already introduced it and we came to know of it when they tagged our Instagram handle," says Vinesh. The idea is mooted by film's titular character, an unassuming backbencher who is perpetually late for class. The concept underlines the need to do away with the practice where the studious children are the frontbenchers and the often disruptive rebels, the backbenchers.

The concept is not new since the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) launched by the Central Government in 1994 in six states, including Kerala, had suggested flexible seating arrangements that some schools had tried. However, most educational institutions have been inclined towards the traditional row system. Vinesh, who wrote the story and co-wrote the screenplay with Anand Manmadhan, Murali Krishnan and Kailash S Bhavan, says that he used to sit like that in his primary classes at Government LPS, Pedikulam, in Thiruvananthapuram. "But when we placed that as the climax, we never expected it to reach so many schools," he says.

The film, starring Aju Varghese, Johny Antony, and a bunch of child actors had several factors stacked against it from the start. It was released after a delay of almost a year and, despite the glowing reviews, it had a rather short theatre run. The OTT release came after seven months, considered a long gap in the business. The first school that introduced the new seating arrangement was RVV HSS, Valakom, in Kollam district, managed by KB Ganesh Kumar, Minister of Transport, Government of Kerala, who is also an established actor in Malayalam cinema. "We had shown it to him several months before the film reached theatres and he liked it a lot. We were unaware that he had introduced the system in his school until one of his relatives told us. However, we could not publicise it when the film released because that was the climax of the movie. We made the reveal only after it started streaming on OTT," says Vinesh.

Vinesh Viswanath, who has directed several short films and a documentary, was an assistant in Anveshanam (2020), directed by Prasobh Vijayan. The pandemic that followed deprived him of chances to work with more directors. "Sthanarthi Sreekuttan has many characters whose traits are taken from the people I know. Some of the incidents have happened to me during my school days," he says. Vinesh has directed the documentary, Ee Booomeente Peru, which captures the journey of Thiruvananthapuram-based theatre troupe, Kanal Samskarika Vedi, when they travelled to Dibrugarh in Assam for Bharat Rang Mahotsav. According to Sunil P Sekhar, headmaster of RVV HSS, the new arrangement was introduced last year in classes one to four. "We are continuing with it. It is not possible to have the semi-circular layout in all classes because the dimensions of the classrooms and number of students in each division varies. We have classes where there are 35 to 40 students. In such cases, we have changed the shape a bit without compromising on the idea of the teacher giving equal attention to all," Sunil says.

Other schools that have adopted this so far include Pappinisseri West LP School in Kannur, Andoor ALP School in Kannur, RCC LPS East Mangad in Thrissur, GHSS at Tholanur in Palakkad, and NSV VHSS, Valacode in Kollam. In most of these schools the class strength is under 20. Bindu MV, head of Pappinisseri West LP School, says that the school was happy to try the layout, which was suggested by one of their teachers, Amal C. "We have implemented it in classes one and three. Since we have only a few students, we found it feasible," she says. Amal adds, "The children and teachers have liked it. The classroom



looks more spacious now." Sajesh PC, headmaster of Andoor ALPS, says that he was receptive to the suggestion put forward by one of the teachers, Athul MT. "We have different clubs in school, and he was the one who started the film club. We were open to breaking conventions when he put forward this idea," says Sajesh. Athul says that all classes except the kindergarten have this new seating system. "We also screened the film for the students since all of them had not watched it," he adds. According to Aalbert Christin, a teacher at RCC LPS, East Mangad, the same idea had been discussed earlier at various training programs organised by the Department of Education. "Our teachers have done it before. It is the best way to communicate with students. The movie has inspired us to make it permanent and now it is in place in all primary classes, except in those classrooms that are not big enough. This arrangement does away with disparity between the academically good and weak students," he adds. However, it must be added that not everyone is happy with the new arrangement. Aalbert says, "The ones who enjoyed being the backbenchers now cannot escape the eyes of their teachers!"

Biocon Biologics gets UK's MHRA approval for Denosumab biosimilars



New Delhi: Biocon Ltd on Monday said its arm Biocon Biologics Ltd has received marketing authorisations from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in the UK for Vevzuo and Evfraxy, biosimilars of Denosumab used in the treatment of bone-related diseases.

Vevzuo is authorised for the prevention of skeletal-related events (pathological fracture, radiation to bone, spinal cord compression or surgery to bone) in adults with advanced malignancies involving bone, Biocon said in a regulatory filing. It is also authorised for the treatment of adults and skeletally mature adolescents with giant cell tumour of bone that is unresectable or where surgical resection is likely to result in severe morbidity.

On the other hand, Evfraxy is authorised for the treatment of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women and in men at increased risk of fractures, the company said. In postmenopausal women, this significantly reduces the risk of vertebral, non-vertebral, and hip fractures, it added. Evfraxy is also authorised for the treatment of bone loss associated with hormone ablation in men with prostate cancer at increased risk of fractures. Biocon Biologics was recently granted marketing authorisation for Denosumab biosimilars by the European Commission (EC), allowing their commercialisation in all European Union (EU) member states and the European Economic Area (EEA), the company said.

A dawn to dusk food trail in Dindigul, the land of seeraga samba biryani



I have suitably skipped dinner the previous night in preparation for my Dindigul trip. A crucial tip to those who plan to visit the town on a food tour: go on an empty stomach. If possible, fast for a week before you start dreaming of seeraga samba biryani, for, you might eat far more than you can handle. Dindigul, located a little less than 65 kilometres from Madurai, is the birthplace of Tamil Nadu's seeraga samba biryani that is now going places. But there is more to the town than just biryani. Here are our picks.

Lamb trotters for breakfast In Dindigul, several restaurants serve biryani from as early as 6am. I do not yield to the temptation so early in the day, and try something different. Bangaru Biryani, started in 1931 by Bangarusamy Naidu, has opened a new outlet on Round Road, serving biryani, idli and idiyappam with a range of mutton and chicken sides for breakfast.

The small eatery that can seat not more than 12 people, is being run by S Giridharan, great grandson of the founder Bangarusamy. Giridharan's father Subbrayalu Naidu trained under the founder in his younger years. A small framed photo of Subbrayalu hangs on the wall, opposite which the menu is displayed. K Angusamy, the master, lays out a feast on a leaf: idiyappam, idli, lamb trotters soup, mutton chukka, vellai kuruma, naattu kozhi kulambu, and mutton milagu kulambu. There is also a serving of mutton biryani and dalcha. The mutton chukka alone, a dish of popcorn-sized boneless mutton slow-cooked with chilli powder and curry leaves, makes the journey worthwhile. The meat is tender, enveloped in a glistening layer of chilli-infused oil, punctuated by crisp curry leaves. It goes well with the idiyappam. A mention must be made of the creamy mutton vellai kuruma, a Dindigul staple. Angusamy explains that it has ground coconut, cashew nuts and roasted chana dal. This curry is the next most popular dish in the town after biryani. It is mild with a hit of pepper, and can be had with idlis as well as idiyappams and dosas.

How much biryani is too much? It is natural to feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of places to eat biryani in town. With three branches, Siva is the new favourite in Dindigul, and I understand why. The oldest outlet, a hole-in-wall place at Begampur, is always packed. Venu, a few blocks away, serves decent biryani too. But there is something about Siva that makes it a tad better. The biryani is light brown, with the rice cooked al dente. The spices are balanced — unlike some restaurants that go a little overboard with cinnamon — and the meat is tender. For people like me who grew up eating Venu, Thalappakatti, and

Ponram biryani, Siva's is similar and different at the same time. A Mohan Raj, a relative of the founder K Ganesan, explains that the trick is to source the right ingredients. While the restaurant has been around from 1989, it really took off after the pandemic, with tourists from Chennai, Bengaluru, and Coimbatore visiting the town just for their biryani. "In 2023, a Japanese restaurateur came to Dindigul for a week-long trip," recalls Mohan. "He ate our biryani for lunch every day, alternating it with kari dosai for dinner." The 32-year-old does not remember his name nor did he understand the guest's language. "But I do know that he went back happy," he says.

Warm, gooey halwa and jilebis It is common practice for tourists to stop at one of the sweet shops for its jilebis after their fix of biryani. Among the oldest such shops is Jilebi Seshaiyer on Sandhai Road. Established in the 1960s, the shop is the brainchild of SK Seshaiyer, who initially sold sweets on pushcarts at various spots in town. His jilebis gradually grew in popularity and today, are served fresh and mildly warm through the day. A piece of the sweet makes the palate happy, and the owner R Bhuvaneshwari suggests we also try the godhumai halwa. The sticky, chocolate-brown dessert is warm and drips with ghee. Coffee with a side of potato masala A savouries shop in a small lane sells what is arguably the oldest snack in Dindigul. Known as 'Alwar kadai', the shop has been around for over 75 years, selling mixture, boondi, murukku, pakoda, among others. But I arrive there on the last leg of my journey for a taste of its potato pottalam, a dish of boiled, mashed potatoes cooked with onions, turmeric and green chilies.

The owner SS Sathyanarayanan who is seated at the counter, says gravely: "It is not yet 3pm." The snack is available only then, and gets sold out soon after. Once the masala arrives from the kitchen, it is packed as small dollops in banana leaves. A little after 3.15pm, he offers a pottalam for me to try. It is triangular — the wrapping gives way to warm, thick, potato masala folded in a banana leaf. It is not too heavy flavour-wise, but can make for a nice snack to go with coffee or tea from the many tea shops in town. As for dinner,

I decide to make do with coconut water. But one can also do another round at Ponram, Venu, Thalappakatti, and Bangaru, not necessarily in that order. How to get there There are several trains from Chennai that stop at Dindigul, such as the Vaigai Express, Tirunelveli Vande Bharat Express, and Pothigai Express. Madurai is the nearest city with an airport, with regular buses to and from Dindigul.

ICMR-NIE study calls for year-round monitoring of respiratory infections

Researchers at the ICMR's National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE) in Chennai have highlighted the need for year-round and integrated surveillance of severe acute respiratory infections and influenza-like illness, which are potential threats to public health, to detect early warnings. This comes in the view of a new public health study, published in 'Discover Health Systems' journal last month, which has revealed key insights into how Tamil Nadu monitors and responds to cases of influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI). The study found that surveillance efforts are stepped up only during outbreaks or specific seasons, even though respiratory viruses circulate throughout the year. The study evaluated the functioning of disease surveillance systems in four districts of the state from 2023 to 2024. Engaging more than 370 stakeholders across 85 healthcare facilities and 23 laboratories, the study found that while Tamil Nadu has built a foundation for respiratory illness surveillance, further improvements are needed to make the system more consistent, routine, and capable of responding to emerging public health threats. "This is the first study of its kind in India that provides evidence-based recommendations to strengthen disease surveillance at all levels," said Dr Rizwan Suliankatchi Abdulkader, the principal investigator of the study, ICMR-NIE. "Tamil Nadu has made significant strides in health surveillance. This report reinforces the importance of year-round, integrated disease monitoring to protect public health," said Dr T S Selva Vinayagam, director of public health and preventive medicine, the Government of Tamil Nadu. The study stated that more than half of the facilities surveyed had systems in place to report ILI/SARI cases, but only 42 per cent regularly collected clinical samples for testing. Besides, relatively few medical personnel had received specific training in identifying and reporting such cases. Testing facilities were mostly concentrated in larger hospitals, with primary and secondary care facilities lacking necessary equipment and resources to conduct tests, Dr Rizwan said. While public health centres widely used the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP), the system faced challenges such as inconsistent data entry, multiple overlapping reporting formats, and minimal participation from private hospitals and labs. "The study also noted that surveillance efforts tend to intensify only during outbreaks or specific seasons, even though respiratory viruses circulate throughout the year," Dr Rizwan said. Influenza surveillance remains a seasonal event in Tamil Nadu, the study noted. "With changing ecological conditions, efforts should be made to ensure year-round reporting of cases. Testing for influenza should be prioritised and infrastructure and testing for novel pathogens should be developed," it said. Although guidelines are in place, a gap still exists in awareness amongst the health workers, especially com-

munity health workers regarding the importance of influenza surveillance. Structured training should be provided for trainers and there should be mechanisms for regular training of community health workers. Frequent monitoring should be employed and structured feedback should be provided to ensure complete and accurate data for a better understanding of the disease trends. Involvement of the private sector in surveillance activities is evident but partial, the study said. A 'One Health' approach should be adopted involving other sectors and data-sharing mechanisms should be in place ensuring transparency of data. With the plans already being discussed by the state, we may expect an improvement in surveillance standards for influenza soon, the study said. Surveillance is the key to identifying and detecting health events in the community and it provides the scientific and factual evidence essential for informed decision-making and appropriate public health action, the study found. Study participants identified several measures to improve surveillance, which included scaling up training for healthcare workers and community-level providers, improving digital infrastructure and mobile access to reporting platforms, expanding participation from private hospitals and diagnostic labs and engaging wide range of health workers such as mid-level providers and community volunteers. Tamil Nadu has already taken steps such as introducing the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) to streamline sample collection and transport. Plans are also in place to establish a "One Health" secretariat aimed at improving inter-departmental coordination and surveillance of zoonotic diseases, Dr Manoj Murhekar, director of NIE said. These initiatives could boost the state's ability to track influenza and other respiratory threats more effectively, he said. The researchers recommended transitioning from seasonal to continuous surveillance of ILI/SARI.

They also suggested boosting laboratory capacity and resources across all levels of care, offering regular refresher training to healthcare providers and establishing structured feedback loops and monitoring systems to improve data quality and reporting accuracy and conducting similar situation analyses across the country. The study was supported by the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. The findings aim to guide state-level policy and improve the preparedness for respiratory disease outbreaks, including potential pandemics, said Dr Murhekar. Respiratory infections are a major contributor to morbidity and mortality. Globally, in 2021, an estimated 2.18 million deaths occurred due to lower respiratory tract infections (LRI), the study mentioned. Influenza viruses were responsible for more than five million hospitalisations. The Global Burden of Disease study has estimated 98,200 deaths due to influenza globally in 2021.

Rate hike unlikely to significantly hit asset quality, says Indian Bank MD



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Indian Bank Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Binod Kumar expects the bank to sustain the growth momentum, maintain profitability and keep asset quality stable in the coming quarters, even as intense competition for deposits puts pressure on banks. In an interview with The Indian Express, Kumar discussed credit growth, the outlook for interest rates following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 25-basis-point (bps) repo rate hike, corporate lending, gold loans, technology investments, and the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on banking jobs. Edited excerpts:

The RBI has increased the repo rate by 25 basis points. Do you expect interest rates to rise further? It will depend on several factors, primarily inflation. Both consumer inflation and wholesale price inflation have been elevated. We also need to consider the relationship between Indian interest rates and US Treasury yields. Interest rates will depend on how these indicators evolve and on the policy decisions taken in the coming months.

Will higher interest rates affect asset quality?

I do not expect asset quality to be affected significantly. There could be some pressure on a section of retail borrowers whose equated monthly instalments (EMIs) are already at their maximum affordable levels. However, banks may be able to extend loan tenures or reset repayment schedules. I do not see interest rate movements significantly affecting overall asset quality.

What is your credit growth target for the current financial year, and which sectors will drive lending?

Credit growth has been running at around 18-19%, but my comfort zone is 14-15%. Retail credit should grow by 15-17%, while corporate lending is expected to grow in the lower double digits. Housing and mortgage loans are growing strongly, at around 28-30%, although the base is relatively small. Corporate credit growth has been relatively subdued. Is it because project investment demand is weak? There is good demand for corporate credit. However, I am cautious about lending at very low interest rates. If a bank raises resources at around 6.5% and lends for 15 years at 7.5%, it has to factor in operating costs and other expenses. Such lending may not be attractive. There is good demand for projects relating to green energy and data centres, and I expect more power projects to come up.

Deposit mobilisation remains a challenge for banks. How are you managing the gap between deposit and credit growth?

This is the most difficult challenge for bank managing directors today. Mobilising resources, particularly CASA

(current account and savings account) deposits, has become increasingly difficult. Fortunately, we have managed the gap between deposit and credit growth at around 1-1.5 percentage points in most periods. Banks also have to ensure that their credit-deposit ratios remain within manageable limits. Deposit pressure exists, but we have been able to maintain our net interest margin because of our portfolio mix. Higher lending rates could also support margins, potentially improving them by around six basis points. Are you confident of expanding retail lending without compromising asset quality? Yes. I do not see any significant stress building up in the retail portfolio. Our special-mention account (SMA) book has declined sequentially from 4.79% to 4.19%. Any emerging stress would generally begin to show up in the early-warning indicators.

How is the gold loan portfolio performing? What is driving its growth?

Our gold loan book is around Rs 1.4 lakh crore. The sharp increase in gold prices has contributed to growth in the value of loans. For the same quantity of gold, borrowers can now obtain a larger loan than they could earlier. However, gold loans are primarily need-based. People generally pledge gold to meet financial requirements rather than for speculative purposes.

Do you need to raise additional capital from the market?

Our capital adequacy ratio is 16.21%. With profits being ploughed back, it could rise to around 17.5%. We do not have an immediate capital requirement. However, a Tier-II bond is due for redemption in January, and we may consider raising around Rs 2,000 crore if market rates are favourable.

How much is Indian Bank investing in technology, and what role will AI play?

Our technology expenditure is around Rs 2,000 crore, and the budget for this year is approximately Rs 2,300 crore. We are implementing AI to improve customer convenience, service quality, systems and processes. We are also incorporating AI into certain products, including models for MSME lending, and taking initiatives in data management and customer relationship management.

Will AI lead to job losses in the banking sector?

I believe the nature of jobs will change, rather than jobs disappearing. AI will also require people to develop, manage and operate these systems. New opportunities and jobs could emerge in areas that we may not have considered earlier. We are training our employees to prepare them for these changes.

How do you assess the bank's performance in the second quarter, and what is the outlook for the third quarter?

The bank's performance is in line with our guidance. Deposits grew by 12.5%, while credit growth was 16.39%. CASA deposits grew by 13.77%, higher than overall deposit growth. Credit growth has been broad-based, with retail growing by 17%, MSME by 19% and agriculture by 17%. Corporate credit grew by 9.92%, compared with 2-3% earlier. Our net interest income grew by 18%. Asset quality also improved, with gross NPAs declining to 1.61% and net NPAs to 0.14%. We expect similar performance in the third quarter, with growth in the 12-14% range, while maintaining profitability and asset quality.



My patients have a perennial question. "I have reduced rice and wheat a lot. I thought my blood sugar would come down, but it is still high. What am I doing wrong?" Reducing rice and wheat can help, but blood sugar is not affected by only these two foods. What you eat instead also matters. Sometimes, people reduce the main carbohydrate but unknowingly replace it with other foods that can raise blood sugar.

I always ask my patients what their typical meal looks like. After reducing rice, what do they usually eat? Most have the same answer. They have little rice, more vegetables and sometimes potato or sweet potato. Some have fruits in between. Others drink tea or coffee with biscuits. Sometimes people switch to ragi dosa or millet dishes because they think they are better for diabetes. Remember that millets and ragi are nutritious, but they are still carbohydrate-containing foods. Simply replacing a large portion of rice with a large portion of millet does not automatically make the meal low in carbohydrates. Also, most millets available in the market are polished. This process removes much of the fibre, which can make the millet digest faster and may result in a higher glycaemic index, which measures how

Which everyday foods can help keep blood pressure in check?



Can a banana a day, a serving of beetroot or a bowl of pomegranate help keep your blood pressure in check? These everyday foods offer nutrients that support heart health, but none is a magic solution. The real benefits come from making them part of a balanced diet, cutting back on excess salt and adopting healthy lifestyle habits. High blood pressure often goes unnoticed, yet it can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney problems. While medication may be necessary, the right food choices can play an important supporting role.

Pomegranate is rich in polyphenols, plant compounds with antioxidant properties that help protect cells from damage. Some clinical trials suggest that pomegranate juice may modestly reduce blood pressure, but the evidence remains mixed and further research is needed. Eating the whole fruit provides antioxidants and dietary fibre. If you prefer juice, choose an unsweetened variety and limit the serving to around 150 ml. Whole fruit is generally preferable because it is more filling and retains its fibre. Pomegranate can complement a heart-healthy diet, but it is not a quick remedy for elevated blood pressure. Beetroot: Supporting healthy blood flow Beetroot contains natural nitrates that the body converts into nitric oxide, a compound that helps blood vessels relax and widen, improving blood flow. Evidence for beetroot juice is encouraging. A 2022 systematic review and meta-analysis of seven randomised controlled trials involving 218 people with hypertension found that nitrate-rich beetroot juice reduced systolic blood pressure by approximately 5 mmHg compared with control conditions. The reduction in diastolic blood pressure was not statistically significant. One small beetroot (75–100 g) can be eaten as a salad, sabzi or cooked vegetable. Alternatively, around 150–200 ml of beetroot juice

quickly a food raises blood sugar. The portion, preparation and what you eat with millets matter.

Sweet potatoes can be part of a healthy diet, but they are also carbohydrate-rich. If you already have rice, dosa or roti on the plate and then add a large serving of potato, the total carbohydrate load can become high. Some of my patients claim they have whole fruits but "healthy" does not mean "unlimited." Eating several servings at once, choosing very sweet fruits frequently, or drinking freshly squeezed fruit juice can raise blood glucose. Fruit juice is especially easy to over-consume because it provides sugar without the same fibre and fullness as whole fruit.

Biscuits are another common trap. They contain refined flour, added sugar and fat. Even "digestive," "multigrain" or "sugar-free" biscuits are not automatically diabetes-friendly. A typical serving of digestive biscuits delivers a fast-acting load of carbohydrates (around 17 g or more per couple of biscuits) that your body breaks down quickly. Do not be misled by vitamin-rich packaged drinks. Vitamins do not cancel out the sugar. Look beyond the health claims on the front of the package. Check the nutrition label for total carbohydrate and added sugar. So, what should your plate actually look like? Think beyond simply cutting rice. Fill a good part of your plate with non-starchy vegetables, include a sensible portion of protein such as dal, pulses, eggs, fish, chicken or curd, and keep your carbohydrate portion controlled. Limit sugary drinks, sweets, biscuits, bakery foods and frequent fried snacks. So, reducing rice alone is not enough? Blood sugar responds to your overall eating pattern, portions, activity, medicines and individual health — not just one food. Instead of asking, "How much rice did I eat?", ask, "What did I eat throughout the day, how much did I eat, and what did I eat instead?" You do not have to fear every carbohydrate. The goal is to understand your portions, choose better-quality foods, combine them wisely and follow your diabetes treatment plan consistently, not selectively.

is a practical serving suggestion, not a scientifically established therapeutic dose. Nitrate content varies between products. People prone to kidney stones may need dietary advice because beetroot contains oxalates. Beetroot should complement, never replace, prescribed treatment.

Bananas: The importance of potassium Bananas provide potassium, a mineral that regulates fluid balance, supports normal muscle and nerve function, and helps counter some blood pressure-raising effects of excess sodium. One medium banana contains approximately 400–450 mg of potassium. Eating one can contribute to daily potassium intake, alongside vegetables, pulses and other fruits. However, a banana alone will not automatically lower blood pressure. The benefits come from an overall healthy dietary pattern. People with chronic kidney disease or those taking medicines that can raise potassium levels should consult their doctor before substantially increasing their intake of potassium-rich foods. Spinach and amaranth provide potassium and magnesium, while tomatoes, broccoli and pulses supply valuable nutrients and fibre. Watermelon contains citrulline, which the body uses to produce nitric oxide, although evidence for a direct blood pressure-lowering effect remains limited. Variety matters more than relying on so-called superfoods.

The strongest evidence supports an overall healthy eating pattern. The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet emphasises fruits, vegetables, whole grains, pulses, nuts and low-fat dairy products while limiting sodium and saturated fat. The landmark DASH clinical trial found that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables reduced blood pressure, with the full DASH eating plan producing greater benefits. Subsequent research showed that combining DASH with reduced sodium intake could lower blood pressure further. Reduce excess salt, packaged snacks, pickles and highly processed foods. The World Health Organization recommends that adults consume less than 5 g of salt daily from all sources. Regular physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, adequate sleep and limiting alcohol also support blood pressure management. Pomegranate, beetroot and bananas can support heart health, but none is a cure for hypertension. A varied, balanced diet offers greater benefits than relying on individual foods. Monitor your blood pressure regularly, follow your doctor's advice and take prescribed medication as directed. Healthy eating complements medical treatment; it does not replace it.

Can Omega-3 supplement help prevent babies from being born too early?

India has more babies born prematurely than any other country, most likely because of a genetic trait. An estimated 3.02 million babies were born preterm in India in 2020 — more than one in five of all preterm births worldwide. Preterm birth, defined as delivery before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy, is the leading cause of death among children under five. Babies born before 34 weeks face the greatest risk of long-term complications, including problems with brain development. A new study published in PLOS Medicine suggests that a common genetic variant may help explain some of this risk. The research, led by scientists at the University of Texas at Austin, with colleagues at the University of Kansas and the University of Kentucky, also points to a possible low-cost intervention: supplementation with docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), an omega-3 fatty acid. "India carries the world's largest burden of preterm birth, and its population appears to carry the genetic variant that raises the risk most often. DHA is safe, cheap and available everywhere. The obvious next step is a trial in India," said the study's senior authors, Prof Kumar Kothapalli and Prof Tom Brenna.

What did the study find?

The study suggests that a common genetic variant may influence the risk of early preterm birth — delivery before 34 weeks of pregnancy. That's because a woman's genetic makeup influences her DHA requirements during pregnancy. Among women carrying the variant, a higher daily dose of DHA was associated with a lower risk of early preterm birth.

How does the genetic variant affect pregnancy?

The variant is found in the fatty acid desaturase (FADS) genes, which help regulate the body's production of arachidonic acid (ARA), an omega-6 fatty acid. ARA contributes to the production of prostaglandin E2, a hormone-like substance involved in initiating labour. Women carrying the in-

termediate (I) version of the variant tend to produce more ARA, which is associated with inflammatory processes. DHA, found in oily fish and fish oil, may counter some of the effects of ARA. This offers a possible biological explanation for why higher DHA intake could reduce the risk of early preterm birth in women carrying the variant.

Could DHA supplements help prevent early preterm birth?

The researchers screened 10,487 women for eligibility and analysed genetic and pregnancy data from 761 pregnant women in the United States. The women had been randomly assigned to receive either 200 mg or 1,000 mg of DHA daily. Among women carrying at least one copy of the I variant, the rate of early preterm birth fell from 4.3% in the lower-dose group to 1.1% in the higher-dose group — a relative reduction of about 75%. However, among women who did not carry the variant, the higher dose was associated with a greater likelihood of pregnancy continuing beyond 40 weeks. The results suggest that DHA requirements may differ according to genetic makeup, underscoring the need to identify who is most likely to benefit from higher doses. DHA is included in some prenatal supplements and infant foods in the United States, but its use specifically to prevent preterm birth requires further investigation.

Why are the findings relevant to India?

Previous research suggests that the I variant is unusually common among people of South Asian ancestry, possibly because of natural selection over many generations. It may therefore be more prevalent in South Asian populations than in several other ancestry groups. This raises an important question: could Indian women, among whom the variant may be common, benefit from higher DHA supplementation during pregnancy? Given India's enormous preterm birth burden, an effective, inexpensive nutritional intervention could have significant public health implications.

Tata Trusts plans 40-50 not-for-profit hospitals across the country: Noel Tata



Tata Trusts, which is witnessing differences of opinion among its trustees and with Tata Sons Ltd, is planning to establish a network of 40–50 not-for-profit hospitals. "We are also working towards a network of 40 to 50 not-for-profit general hospitals across the country, with a model that allows those who can afford to pay for care, help make quality treatment accessible to those who cannot," Tata Trusts chairman Noel Tata said in its

Annual Report. Tata also called for greater accountability, financial discipline and measurable outcomes in philanthropy, saying that institutions must move beyond measuring their contribution by the amount spent and demonstrate the difference their interventions make. His remarks come as the Trusts reported total disbursements of Rs 1,556.31 crore in 2025-26, including Rs 1,353.32 crore in institutional grants and project expenditure and Rs 202.99 crore in individual grants. The dividend income from Tata Sons for FY26 is held up due to the stalled AGM of Tata Sons, a Tata group official said. In his message in the Tata Trusts Annual Report 2025-26, Noel Tata said, "It is no longer enough to ask how much we have contributed. We must ask what difference that contribution has made, and whether that difference will endure." The pending annual general meeting of Tata Sons has stalled dividend payout by Tata Sons, the main income generator for Tata Trusts. The Trusts' ability to sustain philanthropic commitments is closely linked to the income generated from Tata Sons. For FY2026, Tata Sons had recommended a dividend of Rs 1.10 lakh per share. Tata Trusts are eligible for a dividend income of around Rs 2,900 crore from Tata Sons. However, Tata Trusts, which hold 66% stake in Tata Sons, will get the dividend only when Tata Sons AGM clears the dividend, observers said. The last Tata Sons AGM was supposed to be on August 18, but it was adjourned for lack of quorum as Tata Trusts were unable to nominate a joint representative due to a restraining order on sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT). Dividend income from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the major source of income for Tata Sons. "We remain conscious that every rupee entrusted to us carries a responsibility," Tata said, underlining the need for greater discipline in the use of funds and a long-term approach to the country's needs. The annual report shows that rural upliftment received the largest allocation among institutional grants and direct implementation project spending, at Rs 457.62 crore. Education accounted for Rs 270.26 crore, followed by cancer care at Rs 178.46 crore and support for institutions at Rs 169.31 crore. Healthcare received Rs 105.97 crore. Of the Rs 202.99 crore disbursed directly to individuals, medical assistance accounted for Rs 143.30

When the dollar falls and what it looks like for ordinary people

Honest Money: The patient dragon—what twenty years of quiet preparation looks like, and what it means for India Honest Money: What Is India actually worth—the gap between what is declared and what is real Honest Money: When money IHonest Money: The idea that was right — and ignored Opinion: Global reserve currency—how America extracts wealth printing dollars An Irani chai, that thick, sweet glass that still tastes like old Hyderabad, cost the same. Together: Rs 5. A small pleasure that working people could afford without thinking about it. Today the samosa costs Rs 20. The Irani chai, where the shop still exists, comes in a smaller cup and costs Rs 15. Many of those old Irani chai shops are simply closed; the economics no longer work. Nobody announced this change. Nobody signed a document transferring Rs 5 of value out of your pocket. It happened gradually, then all at once, across twenty years. That is what monetary decline looks like from the ground. Not a crisis on a television screen. Not a number on a chart. A smaller cup. A closed shop. A samosa that costs eight times what it did. Three People, One Event, Three Different Stories Across India, millions of people are connected to the global monetary system in ways they do not fully see. When that system shifts, the same event lands differently depending on where you stand. His inputs—fertiliser, diesel, pesticides—are priced in global commodity markets, largely denominated in dollars. When the dollar strengthens, or global commodity prices rise, his costs go up. He does not set those prices. He does not know who does. In recent years, the cost of a bag of DAP fertiliser has more than doubled. His wheat price has not doubled. The gap between what he earns and what he spends to grow it has been quietly narrowing, year after year, for reasons no one in his village fully explains. Karthik Subramaniam works in software in Bengaluru. He is paid in dollars, or in rupees pegged to a dollar salary. When the dollar weakens against the rupee, his effective purchasing power falls even if the number on his payslip stays the same. When global technology companies cut costs and freeze hiring, the market for his skills contracts. He feels like he is doing well. He has a good job. But the real value of what he earns, in terms of what it buys, what it saves, what it builds toward, fluctuates with decisions made in boardrooms and central banks he will never enter.

Mona Agarwal, Avani Lekhara win India's 1st medals at Para Asian Games



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Rifle shooters Mona Agarwal and Avani Lekhara won the first medals for Indian contingent at the Para Asian Games in Aichi Nagoya in a stunning one-two finish. While Mona claimed gold, Avani took a silver medal on what is the first day of the Para Asian Games. Mona claimed gold with a score of 250 which improved her performance from 6th position in the 2022 Asian Para Games to gold at the 2026 edition. She also created a new Asian Para Games record, surpassing Avani's previous record of 249.6. Avani shot 249.6 to claim silver. Avani was second in the qualification phase, behind compatriot Mona, who shot a Asian Para Games Qualification Record of 629.1. Besides winning silver, Avani also secured a quota spot for the LA 2028 Paralympics. Mona had already claimed it at the World Championships.

Who is Mona Agarwal?

Mona Agarwal is an Indian para-shooting athlete from Sikar, Rajasthan, born on 8 November 1987. She contracted polio at nine months of age, which affected both her lower limbs, but went on to build a career across different fields while pursuing her sporting ambitions. Before taking up para shooting, Mona competed in para-athletics and para-powerlifting and also played a significant role in women's sitting volleyball. In 2019, she captained Rajasthan's women's team to gold at the inaugural National Sitting Volleyball Championship. She began competitive rifle shooting in December 2021 and quickly established herself as a prom-

ising talent. After winning a national silver medal in 2022, she earned bronze in the mixed team event at the 2023 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup in Osijek, Croatia. In 2023, she also won gold in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 event at the World Cup in Changwon, South Korea. Shooter Mona Agarwal competes in the women's 10m air rifle event. (Photo: Paralympic Committee of India) Shooter Mona Agarwal competes in the women's 10m air rifle event. (Photo: Paralympic Committee of India) Her breakthrough came in March 2024 at the World Shooting Para Sport World Cup in New Delhi, where she won gold in the women's 10m air rifle SH1 event with a score of 250.7, setting an Asian record and securing a Paralympic quota place for India. She went on to win the bronze medal in the women's 10m air rifle standing SH1 event at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, marking a major milestone in her international career. She also won silver in the mixed team 10m air rifle event at the 2024 New Delhi World Cup. In recognition of her achievements, Mona received the Arjuna Award in 2024. A mother of two, she has balanced family responsibilities with the demands of elite sport and continues to represent India in international para-shooting competitions.

Who is Avani Lekhara?

Avani sustained a spinal cord injury in a car accident in 2012, when she was 10 years old. Her father encouraged her to explore sport during her recovery. Inspired by Olympic shooting champion Abhinav Bindra's autobiography A Shot at History, she began shooting in 2015, initially as a hobby during her summer vacation. Shooter Avani Lekhara competes in the women's 10m air rifle event. (Photo: Paralympic Committee of India) Shooter Avani Lekhara competes in the women's 10m air rifle event. (Photo: Paralympic Committee of India) Avani discovered a natural interest in the sport and gradually developed the technical precision, concentration and mental discipline required for international competition. Avani has also spoken about how shooting helped her build confidence and become more comfortable interacting with people. Avani pursued a five-year law degree at the University of Rajasthan while managing her demanding training and competition schedule. Her journey has also made her a prominent voice for greater accessibility and inclusion in sport.

BCCI appoints Ramesh Powar as member of Men's Selection Committee

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Former Indian cricketer Ramesh Powar was appointed as a member of the Men's Selection Committee on Monday. Powar earlier held the positions of Head Coach of the Indian women's team, Mumbai and Gujarat and was also the Bowling Coach at the BCCI Centre of Excellence. "The Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC), comprising Mr. Ashok Malhotra and Mr. Jatin Paranjape, conducted a selection process for the appointment of a member of the Men's Selection Committee. The CAC met at the BCCI HQ to screen and interview applicants and, following the process, unanimously recommended the appointment," a BCCI press release said. The Mumbai off-spinner played two Tests and 31 ODIs for India, and has since taken up coaching roles at various levels.

In addition, the press release also appreciated Ajit Agarkar for his time as the chief selector. "The BCCI places on record its appreciation for Mr Ajit Agarkar for his commitment, conviction and contribution during his tenure as Chairman of the Men's Selection Committee," the statement read. Earlier, Agarkar decided not to seek an extension as chairman of the senior men's selection committee, so the BCCI will now look for a candidate for the post. "Agarkar didn't ask for an extension. As there was no interest from his side,



the BCCI has decided to look for a new chief selector," a source told. This paper at the time reported in August that BCCI officials would meet Agarkar to discuss a one-year extension to his term after India's tour of Sri Lanka amid differences over Rohit Sharma's ODI future in the lead-up to the 2027 ODI World Cup. Agarkar was appointed chairman of selectors in July 2023. During his tenure, India reached the final of the ODI World Cup before winning the 2024 T20 World Cup and the 2025 Champions Trophy. India also retained the T20 World Cup earlier this year.

High jump icon turns long jump king: Nishad Kumar wins gold at Para Asian Games



GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Nishad Kumar claimed India's second gold medal in the Para Asian Games at Aichi Nagoya. Remarkably, Nishad usually competes in the high-jump event, a discipline where he has won two Paralympic medals. But at the Asian Games, he competed in the long jump, his first competition in an international event, and claimed the top spot on the podium with a leap of 7.11 metres. Nishad began with a jump of 6.95m before improving to 7.09m in his second attempt to take the lead. He extended it with a 7.11m effort in the third round, followed by a foul in his fourth attempt. The Indian athlete bounced back strongly in his final two jumps, recording 7.11m and 7.07m to seal the gold medal. Uzbekistan's Omadbek Khasanov claimed silver with a season-best jump of 6.99m, while Sri Lanka's Mohammad Safran took bronze with a best effort of 6.55m. This is India's second gold medal of the current Asian Games after Mona Agrawal claimed the first in 10m rifle shooting.

Who is Nishad Kumar?

Nishad Kumar (born October 3, 1999) is a two-time Paralympic medallist and high-jump champion from Himachal Pradesh who represents India on the global stage. Competing in the specialized T47 classification (designated for track and field athletes with unilateral upper limb impairment), he usually competes in the men's high jump event, medalling at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics and the Paris 2024 Paralympics. When he was just six years old, he suffered a life-altering accident when his right hand was severed in a grass-cutting machine while helping on his family's farm. Rather than letting the tragedy deter him, he drew core athletic inspiration from his mother, a state-level volleyball player, and took up high jump in 2009, cycling daily for grueling training blocks. He was born into a humble farming family in Badaun village, located in the Amb sub-division of the Una district in Himachal Pradesh, where his father supplemented their small farm income by working as a brick ma-

son. Nishad honed his academic and athletic profile through DAV College, Himachal Pradesh University, and Lovely Professional University (LPU). His incredible vertical leap, tactical run-up rhythm, and upper-body adaptation allowed him to completely master the high-jump bar, training intensively under elite national coach Satyanarayana. On the international athletics circuit, Nishad has established himself as one of India's most celebrated and elite high jumpers. At the World Para Athletics Championships in New Delhi, he cleared a career-best height of 2.14 meters to win his maiden World Championship gold medal and smashed the Asian Record. His dominant leap even dethroned the legendary three-time Paralympic champion, Roderick Townsend.

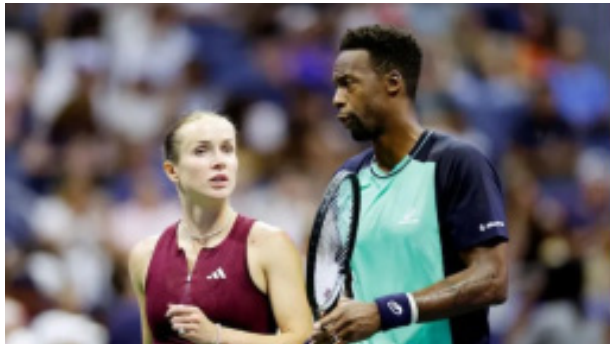
Chinmay Sutar becomes 2nd batter in history of Ranji cricket to score 400

Mizoram player Chinmay Sutar has scored 400 in the Ranji Plate Division against Nagaland at the Nagaland Cricket Stadium in Sovima on Monday. Sutar became the second player to score a quadruple century in domestic cricket, with the first one being BB Nimbalkar, who, playing for Maharashtra, scored 443* against in Pune in 1948.

Sutar became the 10th player overall to score 400 in the history of the game and joined the elite list of batters that includes Brian Lara, Don Bradman and other big names. Lara scored a marathon 501 not out for Warwickshire against Durham in the year 1994. He scored another 400-run mark again later in his career, this time playing for West Indies against England; it was 400 not out in 2004.

Pakistan's Hanif Mohammed came close to 500, but fell one run short, scoring 499 in 1959, playing for Karachi against Bahawalpur in the domestic tournament. In his debut match, Sutar scored 99 and was run out. Before that, the southpaw plied his trade in Mumbai, playing for the esteemed domestic side in the Vijay Hazare Trophy before moving on to Mizoram. In the stellar innings, Sutar smashed 46 boundaries and seven sixes. He was 231 when the last batter, Lalrempuia, joined him. After Sutar's century, Sutar declared the innings at 581/9 in the end, with Sutar unbeaten on 400 runs from 517 deliveries.

'Some battles happen deep inside': Elina Svitolina parts ways with Gael Monfils



Elina Svitolina has announced the end of her five-year marriage with fellow tennis player Gael Monfils. Svitolina, currently ranked World No. 6, cited the emotional toll the war in Ukraine took on her and said she needed to "find my way back to myself". Svitolina wrote on Instagram: "This is the most difficult thing I have ever had to share. Everyone knows how much Ukraine means to me. What I have rarely spoken about is what the war has done to me inside." She mentioned sleepless nights, doubts and "the feeling of slowly losing myself". "Gael saw all of it. He never let go of my hand. We fought through this together for a long time, with everything we had. But some battles happen deep inside you,

and no amount of love from someone else can win them for you," she added.

"Please know that there is no one to blame here. There are only two people who loved each other deeply and a story that is changing shape." Monfils and Svitolina married in July 2021 and have a four-year-old daughter. "Skai will always come first. Our marriage is ending, but our family is not. We will always be her parents, side by side, at every step of her life." Svitolina had ended her 2025 season early due to psychological exhaustion and emotional fatigue, in part from the war in Ukraine. "I haven't been feeling like myself lately," Svitolina had posted on Instagram then. "I'm not in the right emotional space, and I don't feel ready to play, so I am therefore ending my season here." She had added that she needed space "to heal and recharge". The end of his marriage with Svitolina could have played a role in Monfils' decision to retire a little earlier than what was expected. The 40-year-old Monfils had originally planned to bow out at the end of the season. But he is being listed by tennis' drug-testing organisation, the International Tennis Integrity Agency, among the players who have declared themselves retired. His career thus officially ended on October 5 and he will not be having a home farewell at the Paris Masters. Monfils' last appearance was at the US Open, where he lost in the round of 64 to Learner Tien.

Former Indian Head Coach on Bumrah: 'Don't think he should play all three formats'

GNS News Agency, Oct 22 Jasprit Bumrah's workload management will be a top priority for the Indian team heading into the series against New Zealand. The ace-pacer has been suffering from quite a few injuries lately. Former Indian Head Coach Ravi Shastri said Bumrah should only concentrate on the red-ball format, and since the 50-over World Cup is around the corner, he should be playing ODIs from time to time. "I don't think he should play all three formats until the World Cup. He should focus primarily on Test cricket and feature sporadically in ODIs and T20Is. I'd rather preserve him for the two Tests in New Zealand, where he'll be crucial," Shastri said on Sony Sports.

"The entire tour is important. It will give a clear indication of where Indian cricket is heading. Conditions there could also mirror some of what India might face in South Africa during the World Cup," he added. Speaking about Bhuvneshwar Kumar's return to the side. "There is no substitute for experience. When you have a bowler of Bhuvneshwar's quality and experience, it's a no-brainer. With the form he showed in the IPL and his years with India, he'll be ideal for New Zealand conditions," said Shastri.

"You look at a lot of bowlers around the world at the moment (and they) have a lot of pace and a lot of X factor about them, but something Bhuvneshwar brings is control to an innings, the way he can start and use the new ball, and close out an innings, and the experience – for him to be in and around the Indian set-up – will help the next generation of



Indian bowlers as well," former New Zealand cricketer Tim Southee said in a media interaction facilitated by Sony Sports Network earlier. Southee said the pitches in New Zealand will favour the bowlers a lot more around this time of the year. "As a bowler, you'd like to think at this time of year (spring), there could potentially be a little bit of assistance in the wickets, but the curators will try to produce a good wicket as much as they can for white-ball cricket. The one thing here in New Zealand you do get is bounce, which you don't always get in India. So I think that's one thing that subcontinent teams struggle with when they come to New Zealand. I think they'd leave the bounce and try and keep some pace in the wickets as well," the former Kiwi captain said.

'Don't have time to prove anyone wrong': Salman Ali Agha on viral celebration

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

Salman Ali Agha's celebration after he scored a match-winning century for Pakistan against Sri Lanka in the first match of the tri-series on Sunday caught everyone's attention. The former Pakistan captain pointedly kept his finger on his eye, as if it was a message. Agha's action was even more pointed because he was among the seven Pakistan cricketers summoned back home a couple of months back during a horrid tour of England. Understandably, Agha was asked about the meaning behind the celebration and whether it was a message to anyone in particular. "My son watches a lot of TV, so that was for him," Agha said on the post-match show.

When Agha was asked whether this was a message for someone in particular, he retorted: "I don't have the time to prove someone wrong or send messages. I love my cricket, I love batting and I love playing for Pakistan. That's what I do. That celebration was just for my son. Otherwise, I have nothing to do with anything." When asked about having to play first-class cricket to make a comeback into the team after the recall from the England tour (where he had captained the team), Agha said: "I've played first-class cricket for 10 years. If you are grounded, and your feet are on the floor, these things don't matter to you that you are out of the team and then make a comeback. I played five first-



class mates before this tri-series and it helped me immensely. My struggles in the West Indies and England, when those kind of things happen your love for the sport diminishes. I think my struggles were because of my reduced love for the game. Spending time with old friends on the domestic circuit helped me stay grounded." Agha hit 107 off 90 balls and Pakistan scored 305 all out in 49.5 overs after Sri Lanka captain Kusal Mendis won his fourth successive toss and chose to field. Agha's fourth ODI century helped Pakistan craft a 37-run victory over Sri Lanka in the cricket tri-series opener on Sunday.

Why compound archery is likely headed indoors at 2032 Brisbane Games

Compound Archery could be headed indoors at the 2032 Brisbane Olympics, as the sport tries to offer an interesting buffet of formats to the International Olympic Committee, according to World Archery roadmaps. India's Archery Premier League (APL) might've played its part by fielding relay teams of Recurve and Compound archers, and elevating the excitement quotient of the newly introduced Compound bow. Juan Carlos Holgado, Executive Director, World Archery, who is in Hyderabad to witness the APL, revealed that it was time for the sport to get ambitious, and expand the concept for wider audience, so Compound could well head into indoor arenas when Australia hosts the Olympics, offering the sport in a different packaging. "Right now we are focussing on strengthening our sport on the Olympics stage and when we move from Los Angeles (where Mixed Team Compound debuts), to Brisbane, there's some discussions on how to make it more interesting and engaging for spectators. Some concepts (from APL) could be transferred, but right now we are focussed on a strong product with APL, a different competition attracting different audiences. We will propose for Compound events to be held indoors," Holgado told The Indian Express. Australia not being too hot about Archery on the Olympics program had done rounds of speculation. However, Holgado says there's no threat whatsoever, with Fraser Coast's Maryborough zeroed in on as the venue. However, the Compounds' contours of the format are a fresh pitch.

"We are not worried," Holgado laughed. "Archery is in a strong position. We don't see why we won't have a presence in Brisbane. We are ambitious. Which means we are looking forward to getting Compound in the Games. We have

proposed an indoor Compound at Brisbane to make it different from outdoor Recurve. Trying to bring more Compound archers into the Games. At LA there will be only 12 men and 12 women. The community of Compounds are happy to be in the Games but they expect more," he said. Juan Carlos Holgado, Executive Director of World Archery (centre) with India's Jyoti Surekha Vennam. (Photo: Archery Archery Premier League) Juan Carlos Holgado, Executive Director of World Archery (centre) with India's Jyoti Surekha Vennam. (Photo: Archery Archery Premier League) Compound presence is limited only to one day-competition in the mixed team format. "We are trying to find solutions and a formula, something that's meaningful and different like what we have in outdoor archery for Recurve. Looking to make the Compound bow more relevant in the Games," he added. Indoor was an idea the IOC was looking for. "The idea that the IOC has given international federations is clear. They were OK to study, and open to a new discipline but they needed a different concept or bring something to the Games that is adding value to what's currently present. Having Outdoor Compound is very similar to Outdoor Recurve. We want something that is different, brings new types of archers. Indoor is the option," Holgado added. Also Compound is very popular indoors. "At the Indoor World Series and the Vegas Shoot – Compound is dominant among archers and countries. It's a strong bow division for indoor archery," he said, explaining the proposal. At the APL, Holgado is impressed by the innovations that could one day weave into Olympic competitions. "It's fresh. And great to see Recurve and Compound interact together leading to team tactics, of who shoots first and who goes last.

Kamal Haasan, Shankar’s Indian 2 reveals why Boomer uncles easily fall for internet scams



If he wasn’t as distinguished and sanitised as director S Shankar portrays him to be, I can literally imagine Indian Thatha going all Veeramani in Indian 2 and screaming at Chitra Aravindan (Siddharth) and his bunch of useless friends, “Ada kirukku mental pailungala, arivuketta muttal pailungala, ungalale ipo naan road road-aa alayirenda. Paper paper-aa pottu naaradichittangada (You crazy fellows, you senseless idiots, because of you I’m now roaming on the streets. The newspapers have torn me apart).”I mean, without even considering that he is a 100+ year-old fugitive, they made him travel thousands of kilometres for a suicide mission of sorts only to ask him to go back soon after he arrived. Thatha must have been like, “Am I a joke to you?”

Must Read | Jailer 2 movie review: Rajinikanth’s supreme aura carries Nelson’s uneven action thrillerWhile Aamir Khan is often called “Mr Perfectionist,” I think Kamal Haasan gets overlooked. He is also a perfectionist who has constantly prioritised the overall quality of his movies and the intensity of his portrayals, without being weighed down by market mandates.The ‘perfect worst movie’However, I would argue that he is an even bigger perfectionist than Aamir Khan. He is so obsessed with “perfection” that he even made the “perfect worst movie” of all time: Indian 2. I sincerely don’t think our film industry has ever produced a cinematic catastrophe of this magnitude on such a large scale.Yes, train wrecks like Adipurush (2023), Bade Miyan Chote Miyan (2024), and Kanguva (2024) do exist. But Indian 2 is on another level, as it’s a sequel to a movie, Indian (1996), which won three National Awards, including Best Actor for Kamal Haasan. In the latest instalment, however, one can’t find a single thing, aspect, or moment that’s serviceable, let alone praiseworthy.Yet the makers recently announced that its planned sequel, Indian 3, is on the way. If it’s on par with Indian 2, it’s likely to become a massive hit because not just trolls and memers, but even common viewers are going to flock to theatres for a laugh riot.Indian 2 successfully turns many things into a joke: vigilantism, Varma Kalai, elderly people, social media, AI, actor Siddharth, director Shankar, and above all, Kamal Haasan.For the cinematic masterclasses that Kamal Haasan gives in his interviews and speeches, one wouldn’t expect him to do something like Indian 2. Thug Life (2025), I understand — a reunion with Mani Ratnam, where they couldn’t achieve their vision. But that’s where I would draw the line; Indian 2 is far beyond that.The phenomenon that’s Indian Thatha

Then to claim, “The only reason I accepted to do Indian 2 is because of Indian 3,” is a bit too much. If so, then why even do Indian 2 to begin with? Or why create Indian 2 at all, especially since it offers little, and a sensible trim might have brought its runtime down from about three hours to 60 minutes or less?Must Read | Before becoming CM, Vijay was poster boy for films normalising harassment,

Tiger Shroff once admitted he was ‘insecure’, struggles with anxiety: ‘Is this end of the world?’

While Tiger is yet to speak publicly about the incident, the actor had previously opened up about his vulnerabilities, insecurities and struggles with phobias. In an interview with Lilly Singh a few months ago, Tiger spoke about how, contrary to the stereotype of action stars being macho and fearless, he is someone who struggles with anxiety and insecurity.When asked whether he considered himself a vulnerable person, Tiger replied, “I would say so. I am a very insecure person. I know change is constant, but I am scared of change as well.”Tiger Shroff on dealing with fears and taking therapy

During the conversation, Tiger recalled how a turbulent flight a few years ago triggered his fear of flying, something he continues to struggle with.“I am planning on taking a therapy because I have aerophobia. I remember, a couple of years ago, I was on a very turbulent flight, and I don’t have control over a turbulent flight. What do I do? Ever since that flight, I have been really anxious. Every time I have to board a flight, I have anxiety a couple of days prior. And for some reason, I am still not able to get over that,” he said.The actor added that even learning about the safety of air travel and speaking to several pilots had not helped him overcome his fear.“When something like that happens, your nervous system has a different thing going on. I wish I had control over that. That’s the only thing. I am planning to go see a therapist,” he said.Tiger Shroff says he is insecure about his appearance

Tiger also spoke about how he processes his emotions, admitting that he tends to keep things to himself and spends considerable time reflecting on his actions.“I am a very closed person in general, and I internalise a lot of things. I self-reflect a lot. It’s mostly to myself. Every morning I wake up asking myself, ‘So what is it that I am going to do today to get better than I was yesterday?’ And before sleeping, if I don’t answer that question, I really haven’t had a productive day,” he said.The actor further revealed that he often struggles with insecurities about his appearance and physical fitness.“I like to hold on to what’s mine. I am constantly insecure about the way I look. If I don’t exercise for a day, I wake up the next morning, look at myself in the mirror, and I am like, ‘What’s happening? Is this the end of the world? What’s happening to me?’ I am not looking the way I did yesterday, perhaps, or two days ago,” he said.Tiger admit-

objectification

The basic plot of Indian 2 essentially rehashes most of Shankar’s social dramas. He reveals the basic plot at the start itself: “Corruption causes cancer to the nation; corruption kills!” From Gentleman (1993), Indian, and Mudhalvan (1999)/Nayak: The Real Hero (2001) to Anniyan (2005) and Sivaji: The Boss (2007), they all revolve around the same topic, with their backdrops, geographical locations, and character sketches differing from time to time. The heroes in such movies are always crusaders against corruption, with outright vigilantism being the main element that distinguishes Indian Thatha from others.Indian 2 begins by showing that everything is going wrong in Tamil Nadu and that corruption and official apathy have reached an all-time high. Chithra Aravindan (Siddharth) and his friends run an online satirical portal that exposes these issues. I don’t know how all their videos go viral, but they somehow do. These youngsters are vexed by the injustices people face because of corruption and run a campaign calling back Indian Thatha to clean up society.

Kamal Haasan and Shankar’s Indian 2 is a sequel to the 1996 Indian. Kamal Haasan reprises his role as Senapathy in Indian 2. (Credit: Facebook/@LycalProductions; image reimaged using AI)Firstly, in the age of social media and as a user, didn’t Indian Thatha know about Tamil Nadu’s situation before Chithra and his gang informed him? If he did, then why wait until these people personally sent an invitation to him before taking care of things? Sure, he can say that he was waiting for people to want him to return so that his methods wouldn’t be questioned. But as a vigilante who killed his own son for his actions, isn’t that too much justification?Honestly, Indian 2 reveals why many Boomer uncles fall for online fraud so easily, despite having many degrees and high-paying jobs. Why would you, a wanted vigilante, trust a few hashtags on social media and immediately come back to a place that would jail you upon arrival? Also, who would instantly believe a random comment from an unknown social media account named “Sen Indian” saying “coming soon” without running a proper background check?Yes, Chithra Aravindan thinks he is social media, but he should understand that social media isn’t he.From painfully soulless dialogues and never-ending, boring scenes to poor performances, unimpressive music and ridiculous makeup, Indian 2 is a festival of shoddy artistic and creative choices, for which tens of crores were spent. If you think Indian 2 was a one-off mistake from Shankar, you should definitely try watching Game Changer (2025).ICYMI | Vishal’s Magudam is ‘therapeutic,’ ‘kidney-touching’ and makes many bad movies look good

How Shankar turned a bad movie into a train wreckIndian 2 is basically what you get when the director thinks he is better than everyone else and that his visions and artistic decisions can never go wrong. Take a look at what he said about splitting Indian 2 into two parts, thus necessitating Indian 3: “After we started filming and when I sat in the editing room, all the scenes — from my point of view — came out very well. If I compress the whole thing (to make one film), the soul of each and every scene, the feel of every scene, would have been lost.”“All the scenes were looking good, and it was not boring. That’s when I realised that I was able to see that there are two parts in that story. And each part has its own strength and whole form and engaging scenes and a start, a body and a climax. So it evolved automatically in two parts,” he added.Now just think about the sheer number of uninspired, shoddily written and conceived scenes in Indian 2. Had Vishal Scoresese directed Indian 2, we would have at least gotten “phenomenal” BTS videos. Please consider doing that next time, Shankar.Anyway, how about we discuss Malayalam cinema’s “answer” to Saving Private Ryan (1998) next week? It’s the industry’s Avengers, I would say. See you then.Memories of Blunder is a column in which we dissect some of the worst South Indian movies and performances of all time. No offence to anyone whose name surfaces here. They may all have potential, but they blew it that one time. However, don’t play the song if you can’t face the music, right?



ted that he can be obsessive about his physique and the aesthetic he strives to maintain. He also acknowledged that fear and insecurity play a significant role in motivating him.The actor explained that he channels his energy and restlessness into his work, which helps him feel more composed.“I channelise all my energy and all my restlessness into the stuff I do. I think that’s what sort of just centres me and sort of just keeps me calm in a way. Not exactly in a Zen state, but just a little more composed in general in life,” he said.

Tiger narrowly escaped being hit by a bullet when three men on a motorcycle allegedly opened fire at his BMW near Pushpa Park in Juhu, Mumbai, on Sunday evening. The attackers reportedly fired five rounds, injuring his driver and an autorickshaw driver.

The actor also sustained injuries to his hand and chest from gunpowder and broken glass during the incident, according to statements made by Shinde.Speaking to the media after meeting Tiger, the Deputy Chief Minister said, “Both he and his mother are quite shaken. I have assured them that the state government stands with them in the face of the open threats being directed at public figures. No form of threat will be tolerated.”

Shanaya Kapoor gets Student of the Year, reimagined as a thriller ‘After Dark’ series.



Karan Johar announces Student Of The Year After Dark 2Karan Johar announces Student Of The Year: After Dark, starring Shanaya Kapoor, as the franchise takes a darker turn.Filmmaker Karan Johar has announced Student Of The Year: After Dark, a new web series that takes the popular franchise in a darker direction as the original film completes 14 years. Starring Shanaya Kapoor, the upcoming seres promises a shift from the glamour, romance and campus rivalries of the earlier films to a world of mystery, violence and intense competition.

Karan shared a clip with the caption, “Nostalgia is working overtime this week!!! As we complete 14 years of our beloved SOTY franchise...we embark on a new journey taking it forward but it’s now in AFTER DARK! Gritty, gory, unabashed and absolute madness!!!! Gear up! Hotstar Specials: Student Of The Year – After Dark, streaming from 13th November, only on JioHotstar.Karan Johar shared in a statement, “When I look at this new chapter, I see a phoenix rising. We began this franchise with big dreams in 2012 and

Action director sets record straight on Mohanlal dupe rumours, climax controversy



Amid fans’ disappointment over Mohanlal’s limited screen time in director Nelson Dileepkumar’s Rajinikanth-led Jailer 2, mimicry artiste Joby Kodakara’s claim that he served as a dupe for the Malayalam superstar in certain portions of the action thriller only added fuel to their ire, as it meant that Mohanlal may not have even appeared in the scenes people believed he did.However, Jailer 2’s action

now we’re breaking every rule we set. With Reema’s genre-defying direction and Shanaya’s powerful double-role performance, we’re setting the stage for something spectacular. Shanaya isn’t just stepping into the spotlight, she’s shattering it and the first look is just the tip of the iceberg.”

Director Reema Maya added, “This isn’t going to be what you expect. It is Student Of The Year, stripped to its bones and reimagined as a thriller competition web-series. Karan Johar has put his faith in my voice and vision and I’m excited to have fun with this genre. The web series format is giving us a wide canvas for the conversations we want to have with our youth. We had so much fun with the music of the show. The cast is young and incredibly talented. Shanaya is a director’s actor – prepared and hardworking.”Shanaya Kapoor shared her excitement about the project and said, “Student Of The Year: After Dark web series for me is more than just a project, it’s a bold statement. Portraying this character in a contrasting manner is a deliberate choice to challenge expectations and redefine what audiences anticipate from mainstream storytelling. The role is layered, flawed, and unapologetically real. Stepping into her world has been the most challenging and a rewarding experience.”Directed by Reema Maya and backed by Dharmatic Entertainment, the series will stream on JioHotstar from November 13.The original film, Student of the Year, directed by Karan Johar, was released in 2012 and marked the Bollywood debuts of Alia Bhatt, Varun Dhawan and Sidharth Malhotra. The franchise continued with Student of the Year 2 in 2019, starring Tiger Shroff, Ananya Panday and Tara Sutaria.With Student of the Year: After Dark, the franchise appears set to move away from its earlier campus-romance tone towards a grittier story. The cast also includes Divik Sharma and Manya Grover.

director, Chethan D’Souza, has now made a fresh revelation that has put to rest speculation that a body double was used to film key Mohanlal scenes. Still, the movie’s makers haven’t responded to criticism that several moments featuring the Malayalam superstar, including one prominently featured in the trailer, were edited out of the final cut.

Under one of Chethan’s recent Instagram posts thanking Jailer 2’s cinematographer Vijay Kartik Kannan for making the stunt scenes look stunning, one fan asked the action director, “Sir, two doubts: Why was Mohanlal sir’s intro trimmed? I hope there are quite a few scenes of stars that are trimmed. And my other question is: in the car scene (climax), did Mohanlal act in it himself or is it a dupe? There is a rumour circulating that a dupe acted in the scene.”Although Chethan didn’t respond to the first question, since only the makers can say, he answered the second query briefly. “It’s him,” he wrote, confirming that Mohanlal himself appeared in the scene.Meanwhile, a new photo has surfaced on social media, showing Rajinikanth with the major stars who made cameo appearances in the actioner during its climax shoot. According to Deccan Chronicle, the photo appears to have been taken when renowned Telugu actor Mohan Babu, a close friend of Rajinikanth, visited the movie set. Rajinikanth and Mohan Babu are seen sitting with Mohanlal, Shivarajkumar, Jackie Shroff, and SJ Suryah, confirming the Malayalam superstar was present during the climax shoot.Jailer 2 has already become a massive blockbuster and currently ranks as the highest-grossing Tamil film of 2026, having collected Rs 424.25 crore worldwide, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. The actioner has also surpassed actor-politician Vijay’s swansong, Jana Nayagan (Rs 324.68 crore).

‘We wasted an entire year’: Girish AD on shelving Naslen and Mamitha Baiju’s Premalu 2

Director Girish AD spoke about the shelving of Premalu 2, starring Naslen and Mamitha BaijuDirector Girish AD spoke about the shelving of Premalu 2, starring Naslen and Mamitha BaijuDirector Girish AD has publicly expressed frustration over the shelving of Premalu 2, revealing that the team spent an entire year working on the sequel before the project was scrapped and calling the decision unnecessary.“We wasted an entire year on the sequel. There was absolutely no need to shelve it. A year’s worth of work has gone in vain. Such a waste when the sequel never needed to be scrapped in the first place,” Girish said at the success celebration of Bethlehem Kudumba Unit.

What happened to Premalu 2Premalu, released in February 2024, was a romantic comedy produced by Bhavana Studios, the production house backed by Fahadh Faasil, Dileesh Pothan and Syam Pushkaran. The film became one of the highest-grossing Malayalam films of all time and the fourth highest-grossing Malayalam film of 2024. The film’s success was built on its relatability, its humour and the chemistry between Naslen and Mamitha Baiju as Sachin and Reenu, a couple whose awkward, stumbling courtship struck a chord with audiences across languages.A sequel was announced shortly after the original’s blockbuster run. Girish and co-writer Kiran Josey began developing the script. The plan, according to Girish, was to release Premalu 2 during Vishu 2026, roughly two years after the original.However, in April 2026, producer Dileesh Pothan officially confirmed that Premalu 2 had been shelved. In an earlier interview, Girish had attributed the decision to his “gut feeling,” saying he “couldn’t convince myself about the sequel’s story” despite numerous discussions with Kiran Josey and Dileesh Pothan.

What came afterInstead of Premalu 2, Girish pivoted to a new project. Bethlehem Kudumba Unit, a standalone romantic comedy, was produced by Bhavana Studios with the same core technical team, including co-writer Kiran Josey, cinematographer Ajmal Sabu, editor Akash Joseph Varghese and music composer Vishnu Vijay. Mamitha Baiju returned in the lead, this time paired with Nivin Pauly, who replaced Naslen as the male lead. The film released on August 21, coinciding with the Onam festival season.

Bethlehem Kudumba Unit became a massive box office success, collecting over Rs 330 crore worldwide on a budget of Rs 25 crore, according to industry tracker Sacnilk. The number dwarfed even Premalu’s impressive run and made it one of the highest-grossing Malayalam films ever, validating Girish’s standing as one of the most commercially reliable young directors in Indian cinema. At the success



celebration in Kochi, he acknowledged that the idea for the film had existed before Premalu’s success, but that the sequel’s commercial logic had pushed it to the back of the queue. “Since Premalu had been a huge hit, the idea of Premalu 2 came along and we decided to pursue it,” he said.Girish noted that Bethlehem Kudumba Unit was completed quickly after the setback. “Bethlehem was released three to four months after the Vishu window Premalu 2 had been targeting,” he said.

Alia Bhatt’s traditional Bengali look steals the show at Durga Puja

Mumbai: Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt attended the North Bombay Sarbojanin Durga Puja celebrations, embracing an elegant traditional Bengali look for the festivities.The ‘Gangubai Kathiawadi’ actress looked stunning in a bright fuchsia-pink saree featuring delicate gold dot motifs and a metallic border. She paired it with a sky-blue blouse with structured puff sleeves. Adding a distinctive touch, the back of the blouse featured four vertically arranged lotus motifs beneath a crescent-shaped moon.

Alia accessorised her outfit with statement gold jhumkas, golden bangles and a cocktail ring.Further enhancing the traditional appeal of her ensemble, the ‘Jigra’ actress wore her hair in a neat low bun adorned with delicate gold hair accessories and a gajra. Keeping her makeup subtle, she opted for Kohl-rimmed eyes, glossy lips and a small black bindi.Alia was also seen participating in the aarti during the festivities.