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Two youths drown in Kinnerasani canal in Kothagudem district

Kothagudem: Two youths reportedly drowned in the Kinnerasani canal at Karakavagu area of Paloncha in the district on Saturday.

According to sources, the deceased, Thudum Bharat (23) and SK Sameer (24) of Ramavaram area of Chunchupalli mandal had gone to the canal for a swim and drowned as they could not gauge the depth of the canal water.

It was said that they, along with some other friends, attended a party thrown by one of their friends in the Nava Bharat area earlier in the day to celebrate his engagement. The local police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the incident

Drought-like conditions in 315 mandals in T'gana: Agriculture Minister

Hyderabad: Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said on Saturday that drought-like conditions prevailed in 315 mandals in the state due to rainfall deficit and the impact of El Niño.

Rao, who attended a video conference held by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said the state government directed officials to assess the condition of standing crops, conserve available water and ensure the supply of irrigation water and electricity till harvest.

Jangaon records 28 pc rainfall deficit; paddy yield drops amid dry spell: Collector

Jangaon: District Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha informed that the district has recorded 522 millimeters of rainfall as of October 17 against a long-term average rainfall of 727.8 millimeters and is currently facing a 28 percent rainfall deficit.

Of the 12 mandals, seven in the district are experiencing a rainfall deficit, with Raghunathapalli mandal recording the highest shortfall at 52 percent; this mandal has seen no rainfall for six consecutive weeks, he noted.

17 dead, 25 injured in Kolkata Puja pandal stampede;

PM Modi announces Rs 2 lakh ex-gratia relief

Kolkata, Oct 17 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of each of those who lost their lives in a stampede at the Chorbagan Sarbojonin community Durga Puja pandal on Muktarambabu Street in North Kolkata on Saturday, in which 17 people were killed, and 25 people were seriously injured.

PM Modi on X said that the stampede in Kolkata is saddening, and also offered condolences to the bereaved families.

"Wishing the injured a speedy recovery," the Prime Minister said.

He further added that the West Bengal government is providing all possible help to the affected families.

"The Prime Minister has announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each of those who lost their lives. The injured would be given Rs. 50,000," the PMO wrote on X.

President Droupadi Murmu also expressed grief over the deaths, saying that the news of the deaths of people is extremely heartbreaking.

"I express my deepest condolences to all the bereaved families. I pray for the swift recovery of those who have been injured," the President said.

Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan said that he is deeply anguished by the tragic stampede.

"My heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. I pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," VP Radhakrishnan wrote on X.Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has postponed all his Durga Puja-related engagements on Sunday, and asserted that he is in touch with the Chief Minister Shri Suvendu Adhikari about the incident."I have just received the extremely distressing news of multiple casualties after the stampede at the Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal. I pray for the peace of the souls of those who have lost their lives in this tragic accident and extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved family members. The administration is making arrangements for the best possible medical treatment for the injured," HM Shah wrote on X.

PM Modi mourns death of Morbi's Rajmata Vijaykunwarba

Gandhinagar, Oct 17 (IANS) Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday expressed grief over the death of Vijaykunwarba, known as the Rajmata of Morbi, remembering her spirit of service and close association with the people of the Gujarat town.

In a message posted on social media platform X, PM Modi said her personality, commitment to public service and bond with Morbi's residents would always be remembered.

He also prayed for peace for the departed soul and strength for her family members and admirers to cope with the loss.

"I am deeply saddened by the news of the demise of Morbi's revered Rajmata Vijaykunwarba. Her personality, spirit of service and bond with the people of Morbi will always be remembered," PM Modi wrote in Gujarati.

He added: "May the most compassionate Almighty grant peace to the departed soul and give her family members and admirers the strength to bear this grief. Heartfelt tribute. Om Shanti."

Vijaykunwarba was associated with Morbi's erstwhile royal family, which has historical links to the Jadeja dynasty. Morbi was formerly a princely state in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat and is known for its royal heritage.

The title Rajmata, meaning queen mother, reflects her standing within the former royal household. The royal family has remained associated with the town, where its history forms part of Morbi's cultural identity.

PM Modi's condolence message highlighted Vijaykunwarba's relationship with residents and her spirit of service, rather than focusing solely on her royal lineage

Morbi, located in the Saurashtra region, is also known for its ceramic and tile manufacturing industry and its historical landmarks.

The town has undergone considerable industrial development while retaining links to its princely-state past.

CM Revanth Reddy To Meet Top CEOs In Delhi For Invest Telangana Summit

HYDERABAd, October 17

: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will meet CEOs and industrialists of leading global and national companies in Delhi on October 29 to promote the Invest Telangana Global Summit 2026, scheduled from December 7 to 9 at Bharat Future City. The state government will organise a curtain-raiser event, where the Chief Minister will personally invite leading corporate executives to the summit, sources said on Saturday.

The government is stepping up efforts to attract global investors and position Telangana as a preferred investment destination. Companies proposed to be invited include Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft, Apple, Meta, Pfizer, Novartis, Tesla, the France-based aerospace and defence MNC Safran and ITC, among others. Of the 220 proposed members of the summitcouncil, 125 have accepted the government's invitation so far. Nearly 300 representatives from 10 sectors have also agreed to participate, the sources said.Investment roadshows have been held in Chennai and Bengaluru to promote the event. Programmes are also planned in Australia, Dubai, West Asian countries and the United States byOctober 25. Roadshows will be held in Mumbai on November 3 and Ahmedabad on November 4.

The summit's theme is "Your Investment, Our Assurance", and its guiding concept "Pledge to Plot to Plant to Payroll to Product". These highlight the investment process from initialcommitment and land allocation to industrial establishment, employment generation and production, the sources said.

The three-day Invest Telangana Global Summit will be organised across four halls at the Young India Skills University premises in Bharat Future City. The governmentis makingarrangements to accommodate delegates from India and abroad, with around 1,000 hotel rooms in Hyderabad earmarked for participants.

The tendering process for the event, estimated to cost `150 crore, has been initiated. Outdoor courtyard works are targeted for completion by November 15, while indoor arrangementsand works at the university are scheduled to be completed by November 30. An exhibition featuring 25 leading companies from 10 sectors will showcase industrial capabilities and investment opportunities, the sources said.The government is also planning cultural programmes showcasing Telangana's traditions, folk arts, classical dances, fashion, handicrafts, cuisine and Bathukamma celebrations to an international audience.

Sajjanar Participates in Bathukamma Celebrations Telangana

Hyderabad: The Bathukamma celebrations were organized on a grand note at the City Armed Reserve (CAR) headquarters in Petlaburuj, Hyderabad on Friday evening. Hyderabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar participated in these celebrations along with his family.The CAR premises wore a festive look as police personnel and their families, dressed in traditional attire, took part in the celebrations with colourful Bathukammas. Extending festival greetings, Sajjanar, said "The Bathukamma festival is a symbol of the cultural splendor of Telangana and the unique tradition of worshipping nature. Celebrating this festival with our police families, who are constantly working hard to maintain law and order, gave me great joy and satisfaction."

Dasara rush chokes highways out of Hyderabad, long queues at toll plazas

Hyderabad witnessed heavy traffic on major highways leading to various districts on Saturday as the Dasara travel rush peaked. Long queues were reported at several toll plazas, while ongoing road works at key locations worsened congestion.

Hyderabad: Major highways connecting Hyderabad to different districts witnessed heavy vehicular traffic on Saturday as the Dasara festive rush peaked, with long queues of vehicles piling up at several toll plazas.

Traffic congestion was reported from Saturday morning on roads leading to various districts as people left the city to celebrate the festival in their native towns. Officials expect the rush to continue on Sunday.

The Hyderabad-Vijayawada, Hyderabad-Warangal, Hyderabad-Karimnagar and Hyderabad-Kurnool highways were among the major routes that experienced heavy traffic.

Indian Chronicle
English Daily

KCR and the power of public trust

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

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

Schemes such as Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima formed part of a wider approach towards farmer welfare. Mission Kakatiya, Mission Bhagiratha, irrigation projects and reliable electricity were interconnected in the larger development journey of rural Telangana. The idea was clear: when the farmer receives water, electricity and financial support together, the foundation of rural economic life becomes stronger.

There was a time when power shortage was considered an unavoidable problem in Telangana. The transformation that followed was therefore significant. Electricity generation capacity, transmission networks, substations and distribution infrastructure received attention on a large scale. The increase in power demand also reflected the changing economic needs of the State. Agriculture expanded, industries grew and household consumption increased. Strengthening the power sector became an essential part of the development process.From farmers' fields to Sircilla's looms, reliable electricity became a symbol of development under KCR, shaping public memory and Telangana's political debateElectricity is not just an urban necessity; it is also the backbone of village life. From a farmer's borewell motor to a small industrial machine, and from a school or hospital to a shop or household, every activity depends on a reliable power supply. During the KCR-led government, uninterrupted electricity gradually became an important public expectation. For many people, the change was not something they merely heard about; it was something they experienced in their daily lives.The importance of electricity becomes even more visible in places such as Sircilla, where handloom, powerloom and textile activities are closely connected with the livelihood of thousands of families. For these communities, electricity is not simply a convenience. It is the force that keeps the looms running and the local economy active. When a machine stops, production is affected; when production suffers, family incomes are affected. Dependable electricity therefore has a direct bearing on the economic lives of local communities.The political significance of the KCR period is closely connected with such experiences. Political slogans may change, but the memory of development remains in the minds of people when they have personally experienced it. A farmer who could run his motor with greater confidence, a family that enjoyed a reliable power supply, and a small industrial unit that could operate its machinery without constant fear of interruptions naturally remembers the period in which these changes became visible.

Former ZPTC Pabba Mahesh Gupta Bathukamma and Dasara Greetings wishes To people

"October 17.(Indian chronicle)Medak.""Shivampet: Prominent social worker and former Shivampet ZPTC Pabba Mahesh Gupta has extended heartfelt greetings to all sisters of Shivampet village and mandal on the occasion of Telangana's state festivals - Bathukamma and Dasara (Vijayadashami).""Speaking on the occasion, he said that the Bathukamma festival is a symbol of Telangana's culture, traditions, and the self-respect of women. He stated that Bathukamma is a unique and great festival celebrated by worshipping nature and adoring flowers.""Every sister in Shivampet mandal should celebrate the Bathukamma festival with great joy, enthusiasm and togetherness with family members. I sincerely pray and wish that these festivals of Bathukamma and Dasara bring happiness, good health, longevity and prosperity into everyone's lives, and that every home be filled with joy and contentment," he said.""He further called upon everyone that it is the collective responsibility of all of us to preserve and protect the festivals of Telangana and to always respect and honour our women.

Charlotte, Michigan Telugu Communities Celebrate Culture and Service

Charlotte Telugu Sambaralu 2026 was celebrated with great enthusiasm, featuring a vibrant lineup of cultural and artistic performances by children, youth and adults, including classical music, classical dance, freestyle dance and other programs. A major attraction was the Science Fest, which introduced children to nine scientific concepts through interactive experiments and exciting demonstrations involving dry ice, a plasma ball and other innovative activities. The event brought together Telugu organizations, including TANA, GTA and APTA, promoting local talent, preserving Telugu culture and strengthening community unity. NATS President Raj Allada attended the celebrations, which recorded an impressive 800 new registrations. Organizers thanked the artists, children, parents, volunteers, sponsors, organizational representatives and attendees for making the event a grand success.""Meanwhile, the North American Telugu Society (NATS) inaugurated its Michigan chapter in Farmington Hills to strengthen community service, preserve Telugu culture and encourage youth participation. Sridevi Manepalli was appointed chapter coordinator, with Mahi Bollavaram as joint coordinator, Ravi Chalanti overseeing events and logistics, Hema Suraparaju as treasurer, Jyothi Javvadi handling membership, and Anupama Divakarla managing public relations and media. NATS Chairman Kishore Kancherla highlighted the organization's helpline and its support for Telugu people in need, while President Raj Allada reaffirmed NATS' commitment to community service.""The event honored community contributors Manorama Gandhi, Kuchipudi promoter Sandhya Sri Atmakuri, Telugu language initiative Manabadi, community service contributor Sunny Reddy, and Dr. Harinath Policherla for his work in medicine and cinema. Kuchipudi performances by local students added cultural flair to the celebrations. Representatives of APTA, the Detroit Telugu Association, the Detroit Telangana Community and the Indian Overseas Congress also attended and supported the new chapter.""The Michigan chapter plans to organize at least one major social initiative every quarter, focusing on women's health and empowerment, youth leadership, sports, family activities, and preserving Telugu language and traditions for future generations. PRO GK Media Ganesh - Kumar.

Advocate Shashibushan Kache Reappointed to the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission Advisory Committee.

"HYDERABAD — In an official directive issued on October 16, 2026, Sri V. Ramchander, Secretary of the Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission (TSERC), announced the appointment of prominent Manthani-based advocate and social activist, Shashibushan Kache, as a member of the State Advisory Committee."This prestigious tenure is designated for a duration of three years. Notably, this marks Sri Kache's third consecutive term serving on this esteemed advisory body, underscoring his continued dedication and expertise in public advocacy and power sector regulation."Expressing Gratitude"Upon his reappointment, Sri Shashibushan Kache extended his heartfelt appreciation to key leadership figures for their unwavering support and confidence in his capabilities:"> "I express my profound gratitude to the Honorable Chairman of the Commission, Justice Devaraju Nagarjun, Honorable Chief Minister Sri A. Revanth Reddy, Honorable Deputy Chief Minister Sri Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Honorable Minister for IT & Industries Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, TPCC President Sri Bomma Mahesh Kumar Goud, and TPCC General Secretary Sri Duddilla Srinu Babu for bestowing this responsibility upon me once again."

MLA BANDARI LAKSHMA REDDY Performs Varuna Yagam at Chilkanagar Shiva Temple

"CHILKANAGAR, OCTOBER 17 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy led the performance of a Varuna Yagam at the Shiva Temple in Chilkanagar, praying for abundant rainfall, a bountiful harvest and the well-being and prosperity of the people across Telangana.

On the occasion, the MLA performed special prayers and sought the blessings of Lord Varuna for timely and sufficient rainfall throughout the state. He expressed his hope that farmers would receive adequate irrigation water, crops would yield a rich harvest, and happiness and prosperity would prevail in farmers' families."

Prayers were also offered for the health, happiness and well-being of all people. The participants prayed for favourable weather conditions, the replenishment of lakes and ponds, further development of the agricultural sector and the overall prosperity of Telangana."Local BRS party leaders, devotees and others participated in the religious programme.

MANDUMULA PARAMESWAR REDDDY Participates in Special Prayers During Sharannavaratri Celebrations in Uppal

"UPPAL, OCTOBER 17 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):"Sharannavaratri celebrations are being held with great devotion across the Uppal constituency. On this occasion, Uppal Congress Party in-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy visited several temples and Durga Devi pandals across the constituency and participated in special prayers. Organisers and devotees welcomed him at various temples and pandals."He visited the Sahasra Lingeshwara Swamy Temple in AS Rao Nagar Division; the Nalla Pochamma Temple in Kandi Guda Division of Kapra; the Durga Devi idol installed at the Bhavani Nagar Welfare Association community hall; and the goddess pandal organised by the Simhavahana Youth Association at Yellareddyguda in Kapra Division. He also participated in Navaratri celebrations organised by the Gopal Reddy Nagar Welfare Association in Vampuguda Division, the Pochamma Thalli Youth Association in Saibaba Nagar, and the Adishakti Youth Association. He also offered special prayers to the goddess at Padmashali Township.Speaking on the occasion, Parameshwar Reddy expressed happiness over visiting Sri Mahankali Temple in Nacharam and offering special prayers to Goddess Saraswati, in whose divine form the goddess was being worshipped as part of the Sharannavaratri celebrations. He said that worshipping the goddess in different forms each day during Navaratri reflects the rich traditions and cultural heritage of the people."He noted that the Dasara festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and grandeur across Telangana. He prayed for the happiness, prosperity, good health and well-being of all the people of the Uppal constituency and extended advance Dasara greetings to the public."Former corporators Singireddy Dhanpal Reddy, Swarnraj Shivamani, Pavani Reddy, Seetharam Reddy and Anjireddy; Medchal–Malkajgiri District Agricultural Market Committee Vice-Chairman Vittal Naik; division presidents Teelu Yadav, Srihari and Prakash Reddy; Minority Wing President Aziz; senior Congress leaders Pedda Srinivas, Pedda Nagaraju, Kobbari Naga Sheshu, Kobbari Nagaraju, Murali, Bhupal Reddy, Sunku Srikanth Reddy, Raghu, Sujith Reddy, Singireddy Vikas Reddy, Rakesh Yadav, Purna Yadav, Battala Srinu, Jagadish and Shivanna, along with temple committee members, division-level Congress leaders and party workers, participated in the programmes.

Art Competition 'The Journey of a Grain' for Students

"Hyderabad, October 17 (Indian Chronicle) : Vajrateja Rice Clusters Pvt. Ltd., which is set to launch its Beejam rice brand, is organising a statewide art campaign titled 'The Journey of a Grain' to raise awareness among students in Telangana about agricultural practices. Vajrateja Executive Director and CEO Hanuman Prasad, in a statement on Saturday, said that students from Classes 6 to 12 could participate in the competition by illustrating the various stages of paddy cultivation. He made the announcement along with Managing Director Chittipolu Yadagiri. The last date for submitting entries is October 31. The first three winners will receive cash prizes of ?20,000, ?10,000 and ?8,000, respectively. Students can register for free at registration.beejam.co.in.

Sajjanar Joins Police Families for Bathukamma Celebrations

"Hyderabad Correspondent, October 17 (Indian Chronicle): Hyderabad Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar participated in Bathukamma celebrations along with his family and police personnel at the City Armed Reserve (CAR) headquarters in Petlaburj on Friday evening. Women police personnel, staff members and their families attended the celebrations in traditional attire, arranging colourful floral Bathukammas. Sajjanar joined women personnel in singing Bathukamma songs and participating in kolatam, marking the occasion with the police community. Describing Bathukamma as a symbol of Telangana's cultural heritage and reverence for nature, Sajjanar said he was happy to celebrate the festival with police personnel and their families. He wished women happiness, good health and prosperity. CAR headquarters DCP R. Venkateshwarlu and zonal DCPs Kiran Khare, Rakshita Krishnamurthy, Shilpavalli, Lavanya Naik and Venkatalakshmi attended the celebrations, along with other officers, staff members and their families.

Dasari Raghu Elected PRTUTS State Associate President for Third Consecutive Term"

"Manthani, October 17:""Dasari Raghu, a Secondary Grade Teacher (SGT) working at the government school in Surayyapalli village of Manthani mandal, has been unanimously elected as the State Associate President of the Progressive Recognised Teachers' Union Telangana State (PRTUTS) for the third consecutive term.""The election was held during the 6th PRTUTS State Council meeting conducted on October 15 and 16 at GM Gardens in Nalgonda. The newly elected body will serve for the 2026–2028 term.""Expressing his gratitude following his unanimous election,

Dasari Raghu thanked MLC Sripal Reddy, PRTUTS State President Sunkari Biksham Goud, State General Secretary Bhattapuram Madhusudhan Reddy, Peddapalli District President Gandu Krishnamurthy, and District General Secretary Kanuganti Srinivas for their support and encouragement.""He also extended special thanks to Manthani Mandal President Gaderla Komuraiah Goud and Mandal General Secretary Eggidi Suresh for their cooperation and support in securing his election.""Raghu expressed his commitment to working for the welfare of teachers, protecting their rights, and strengthening the teachers' union across Telangana.

BRS Leader Shambhipur Krishna Attends Devi Navratri Celebrations in Quthbullapur.

“Dundigal (Quthbullapur) | October 17, 2026“Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader for the Quthbullapur constituency, Shambhipur Krishna, actively participated in the ongoing Devi Navratri festivities in Bowrampet (Division 295) under the Dundigal Circle of Quthbullapur constituency.“On this auspicious occasion, Shambhipur Krishna visited various Durga Puja pandals set up by local resident associations across the division. He offered solemn prayers and performed special poojas, seeking divine blessings for the prosperity and well-being of the region's people.“The spiritual event witnessed the presence of several prominent local dignitaries and political leaders, including Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) Chairman Middela Bal Reddy, former councilors Bembadi Buchi Reddy, Nacharam Murali Yadav, and Palpanuri Vishnu Vardhan Reddy. PACS Director Jeetayya, senior party leaders SV Surender Reddy, Akula Babu, Bindla Gopal, along with leaders Aerolla Janga Reddy, Prashanth Reddy, Kummari Mallesh, Pradeep Reddy, Sunil, and Srikanth were also in attendance.“A large congregation of temple committee members, association representatives, local leaders, and devout followers participated in the sacred ceremonies with great fervor and enthusiasm.

Bathukamma is a symbol of Telangana culture and traditions - Sarpanch Kanchala Chandrasekhar

““October 17(Indian Chronicle).Medak““ Shankarampet Sarpanch Kanchala Chandrasekhar extended greetings of Bathukamma and Dasara (Vijayadashami) festivals, which is the state festival of Telangana, to all the women in Chinna Shankarampet village and mandal. ““Speaking on this occasion, he said that the Bathukamma festival is a symbol of Telangana culture, traditions and self-respect of women. He said that Bathukamma is a great festival celebrated by worshiping nature and worshiping flowers.““"Every woman in Chinna Shankarampet mandal should celebrate Bathukamma festival with joy and enthusiasm along with family members. I wholeheartedly wish that these Bathukamma and Dasara festivals bring happiness, health and prosperity in everyone's life and that happiness should blossom in every house," he wished.““He called upon that it is the responsibility of all of us to preserve the festivals of Telangana and to respect women.

FORMER CORPORATOR BANNALA GEETHA PRAVEENMUDIRAJ Inspects CC Road Works Worth 56 Lakh in Beerappagadda Division

“BEERAPPAGADDA, October 17 (Indian Chronicle):“Former GHMC Corporator and Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj inspected the ongoing CC road construction works worth approximately ?56 lakh in Beerappagadda Division under the Uppal Assembly constituency on Friday, along with Municipal Corporation officials.“The road is being constructed from Shankarayya's grocery shop to Akram's residence in Srinagar Colony. During the inspection, she reviewed the progress of the works and offered several suggestions to the officials to ensure quality construction.“Speaking on the occasion, Bannala Geetha Praveen said that development works were being taken forward in accordance with the promises made to the public. She instructed officials to ensure that all construction activities strictly adhere to prescribed quality standards.“She emphasized that municipal officials should continuously monitor the works until completion and ensure that the contractor follows all stipulated guidelines. She also stressed the need to take adequate precautions to prevent inconvenience to residents during the construction process.“Stating that the development of colonies and the provision of better civic infrastructure remained their

primary objectives, she said efforts were being made to undertake development works according to public needs and complete them with the highest standards of quality.“BRS state leaders Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, Edulla Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Kaleru Narsing Rao, Balakrishna Goud, Banti Goud, Balaji, Akram, Shankarayya and others participated in the programme.

Dasara Gifts Distributed to Sanitation Workers on the Occasion of Regalla Satish Reddy’s Birthday

“UPPAL, OCTOBER 17 (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“BRS leader Regalla Satish Reddy celebrated his birthday by organising a clothes distribution programme for sanitation workers as a Dasara gift.Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, who attended the programme as the chief guest, distributed Dasara gifts to sanitation workers, cut a birthday cake and extended his warm wishes to Satish Reddy.On the occasion, the MLA wished Satish Reddy good health, happiness and a long life, expressing hope that he would continue to undertake more social service activities in the future.“The MLA also appreciated the initiatives taken on the occasion, including planting saplings and organising a blood donation camp. He said that conducting such programmes to honour sanitation workers, who work tirelessly to maintain public health and cleanliness, was highly commendable and reflected a spirit of compassion and social responsibility.“Former MLA Bethi Subhash Reddy, former MBC Corporation Chairman Taduri Srinivas, former corporators Kotha Rama Rao, Golluri Anjaiah, Bonthu Sridevi Yadav, Singireddy Sirisha Somasekhar Reddy, Pavani Manipal Reddy, Prabhudas and Ponnala Devender Reddy attended the programme.“Several local leaders and activists from the BRS, Congress, BJP and Telugu Desam Party, along with sanitation workers, also participated in the event.

Hyderabad Police Arrest 10 in Kidnapping-for-Ransom Case, Seize Rs 1.07 Crore

Hyderabad Correspondent, October 17 (Indian Chronicle): Chikkadpally police and the Commissioner’s Task Force, Secunderabad Zone, have arrested 10 alleged members of a kidnapping-for-ransom gang and seized Rs 1.07 crore in cash, gold ornaments weighing 118.26 grams, five vehicles and nine mobile phones. Two other accused are absconding. Secunderabad Zone DCP Rakshitha Krishnamurthy said the case relates to the abduction of 53-year-old jewellery businessman K. Srinivas Rao, who went missing on October 5 while travelling to his shop in Ramanthapur. Investigators found that he had allegedly been abducted near Golnaka Flyover, blindfolded and confined at an undisclosed location. She said the gang demanded Rs 15 crore from the victim’s family and allegedly extorted Rs 1.30 crore before releasing him. The kidnapping was reportedly linked to a dispute over a real estate venture at Hemanagar in Boduppal. The accused allegedly impersonated police personnel and used vehicles with fake number plates to evade detection. The operation was conducted under the supervision of DCPs Rakshitha Krishnamurthy and Vaibhav Gaikwad, Additional DCP J.

Narasaiah and Chikkadpally ACP G. Ranaveer Reddy. Chikkadpally SHO L. Madhu Babu, Task Force Inspector Rajashekar, Crime staff and Task Force and Secunderabad Zone personnel, took part in the operation. The arrested accused are being produced before a court for judicial remand. Further investigation is under way to trace the absconding accused and pursue further recoveries.

ACB Estimates Keesara Inspector’s Assets at Rs 2.28 Crore

“Hyderabad Correspondent, October 17 (Indian Chronicle): The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has estimated the assets of Keesara police inspector Arkapally Anjaneyulu at Rs 2.28 crore following searches at his residence, office and locations linked to his relatives, associates and alleged benamidars. The searches, conducted on Saturday, October 17, were part of a disproportionate assets case registered over allegations that he had accumulated wealth beyond his known sources of income, the ACB said. Officials identified properties including houses and plots in Saroor Nagar and LB Nagar, an under-construction house at Perur village, and two acres of agricultural land at Haliya in Miryalaguda. They also found Rs 7 lakh in cash, gold ornaments weighing 60 tulas, a Maruti Vitara Brezza car, and household and electronic items. The ACB said further verification was under way, including examination of additional agricultural land. Anjaneyulu was arrested on September 17 in a separate bribery case involving an alleged demand for Rs 8 lakh and acceptance of Rs 5 lakh. The disproportionate assets case remains under investigation.

Congress Senior Leader Avulagadda Srinivas Yadav Participates in Special Prayers at Jambavanth Youth Association’s Devi Mandapam

“RAMANTHAPUR, OCTOBER 17 (Indian Chronicle):Special prayers were performed with devotion at the Devi Mandapam established by the Jambavanth Youth Association in Rajendra Nagar Colony, Ramanthapur, on the occasion of the Sharannavaratri celebrations.“Congress senior leader Avulagadda Srinivas Yadav visited the mandapam and participated in the special prayers offered to the Goddess. Prayers were offered for the welfare of the world, with wishes for the good health, happiness, and prosperity of all people, as well as peace and brotherhood in society.“Devotees gathered at the mandapam and offered special prayers to the Goddess with great devotion. The Sharannavaratri celebrations organised by the Jambavanth Youth Association in Rajendra Nagar Colony are continuing amid enthusiastic participation from devotees.“Association members are actively involved in organising the festivities and making the necessary arrangements for devotees.“Jambavanth Youth Association President Gaddam Sai, General Secretary Ravi Maska, association members, local leaders, colony residents, and devo-

tees participated in the programme.“[18:05, 17/10/2026] +91 93911 09207: End

Sama Mohan Reddy Seeks Special Drive for Minority Graduate Voter Enrolment

Hyderabad Correspondent, October 17 (Indian Chronicle): Graduate MLC candidate Sama Mohan Reddy has urged Minister Azharuddin to organise a special drive to increase voter registration among minority graduates in Hyderabad ahead of the Graduate MLC elections. Mohan Reddy met the minister on Saturday and sought focused measures to create awareness about the enrolment process and help eligible minority graduates register as voters. He stressed the need for the authorities concerned to give priority to reaching eligible graduates who may otherwise miss the opportunity to enrol. The initiative, he said, should ensure that all eligible graduates are given an opportunity to participate in the electoral process. The appeal focused on improving awareness and facilitating registration among minority graduates, with the objective of ensuring wider participation in the forthcoming Graduate MLC elections.

Ex-Corporator Shanti Srinivas Reddy Participates in Annadanam During Navratri Celebrations

“Old Alwal October 17(INDIAN CHRONICLE)““Former Corporator Shanti Srinivas Reddy participated in the Annadanam programme organised near the Ramalayam Temple in Old Alwal as part of the ongoing Navratri celebrations.The programme was held in a spiritual atmosphere, reflecting the spirit of devotion, service and community participation associated with the festive season. Shanti Srinivas Reddy joined Arun and Saajid on the occasion and participated in the religious service.The Annadanam programme served as an expression of devotion and the tradition of offering food to devotees during the auspicious Navratri festivities. The event highlighted the importance of community service and the spirit of togetherness during the celebrations.The programme concluded in a devotional atmosphere, with participants taking part in the festive activities.

Grand Durga Mata Navaratri Celebrations Held at Suryanagar Colony

“Alwal October 17(INDIAN CHRONICLE)““ The Durga Mata Navaratri celebrations were held with great devotion and grandeur at Suryanagar Colony in Macha Bollaram under the auspices of Jai Durga Bhavani Youth Association. Special puja rituals were performed to Goddess Durga, with devotees participating in the religious festivities with immense faith and enthusiasm.Malkajgiri MLA Marri Rajashekar Reddy, former Alwal Corporator Shanti Srinivas Reddy and Doli Ramesh attended the celebrations as chief guests and offered prayers to the Goddess. BJP leaders Macherla Srinivas and Uday Prakash also participated in the programme and sought the blessings of Durga Mata.Members of the Jai Durga Bhavani Youth Association, including Macherla Sivakumar, Jagadish, Kondal Rao, Sai, Manoj, Sivakumar, Mahender, Yatin, Shailender, Pavan, Arun, Harsha and Gaurav, actively participated in organising the celebrations. A large number of colony residents and devotees also attended the event.On the occasion, the organisers

expressed their wish that the blessings of Goddess Durga bring good health, happiness, peace and prosperity to all.

Sports Ministry revises NSF assistance scheme with Rs.7,386.74-crore outlay

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Hyderabad: The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has issued operational guidelines for the revised Scheme of Assistance to National Sports Federations (NSFs), incorporating updated norms for various components following the government's approval to continue the scheme from 2026-27 to 2030-31, covering the 16th Finance Commission cycle, with a total outlay of ?7,386.74 crore.The scheme is the principal mechanism for supporting Indian athletes in preparing for major international events such as the Olympic Games, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Paralympic Games and World Championships.It provides support for national coaching camps; training at academies; athlete-related expenses, including boarding, lodging, sports kits, insurance and sports science services; engagement of foreign coaches, High Performance Directors and support personnel such as physiotherapists, sports scientists and doctors; overseas training and participation in international competitions; senior, junior and sub-junior national championships; grassroots and junior athlete development; and administrative and governance support for NSFs.The revised scheme includes several new strategic components aligned with India's long-term sporting vision and preparations for the 2036 Olympic bid and the 2030 Commonwealth Games.Enhanced assistance for hosting international sporting eventsUnder the revised scheme, financial assistance for hosting international tournaments in India has been substantially increased. NSFs can now receive assistance of up to ?50 crore to host an international event, depending on its nature and importance, as well as the number of participating countries and athletes. Proposals will be assessed by a designated committee headed by the Secretary (Sports).Currently, athletes preparing for major international sporting events, including the Olympics, train at National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs), academies, private sports facilities and overseas training centres.

To provide specialised, high-standard training, Olympic Training Centres (OTCs) equipped with the latest sports science equipment are planned. Each centre will be dedicated to a single sport and have modern training facilities and expert personnel, reducing Indian athletes' reliance on overseas training.Elite Indian athletes training at these centres will receive support for coaches and technical staff, sports science services, specialised equipment and technical assistance.Support for National GamesRecognising the importance of the National Games and the need to organise them on an appropriate scale, the revised scheme provides assistance of up to ?50 crore for conducting the event. The assistance will cover sports equipment, Timing, Scoring and Results (TSR) services, remuneration for technical officials and technical operations.Support for indigenous sports seeking global recognitionTo expand the international reach of indigenous sports, the revised scheme includes assistance for NSFs representing these disciplines. The support will help federations pursue the inclusion of indigenous sports as demonstration events at global competitions such as the Olympics, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.It will also support the establishment of national federations in other countries and provide assistance to international and continental federations of indigenous sports that have their offices in India.International sports cooperation with Global South countriesIndia has high-performance centres and training facilities at both Sports Authority of India (SAI) and non-SAI centres. These facilities could position the country as a leading partner for nations in the Global South by facilitating athlete and coach training through scholarships and subsidised access to facilities.The revised scheme includes provisions for financial assistance towards such international cooperation initiatives.Support for sports events organised by multilateral bodiesThe revised scheme provides financial assistance for organising sports competitions, sports-related conferences, meetings, research projects and workshops for multilateral bodies such as BRICS and BIMSTEC, as well as other similar organisations.Support for recognised international and continental sports bodies in IndiaThe revised scheme also provides for funding to NSFs or the National Olympic Committee (NOC) to support recognised international and continental sports bodies operating in India. Assistance will be extended on a case-by-case basis, based on recommendations from a designated committee headed by the Secretary (Sports).

Actor Imran Khan moves Bombay High Court against FRRO's 'Leave India Notice'

Actor Imran Khan on Saturday filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court against the Leave India Notice (LIN) issued by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), asking him to leave India by October 28, calling it "unconstitutional".The notice was issued on October 14 for an alleged violation of the Immigration and Foreigners Act (IFA), 2025, by joining a protest against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar near August Kranti Maidan on October 10.The 44-year-old actor sought to quash and set aside the LIN, along with an "immediate stay" on its operation and implementation, pending disposal of his writ plea.

The plea also sought an interim relief from the court to restrain officials from taking coercive steps, including deportation, issuing a Look Out Circular (LOC), blacklisting, or taking action against his OCI status.Khan claimed the "non-bonafide" LIN was issued with "high-handed and grossly disproportionate abuse of power."Advocates Zulfiquar Memon, Parvez Memon, and Chirag Naik of MZM Legal are likely to mention the plea on Monday before a division bench led by Chief Justice Mahesh Chandra Tripathi for an urgent hearing.After Mumbai Police detained the actor at October 10 protest, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya filed a complaint alleging the US citizen and OCI cardholder violated the law. Following an FIR forwarded by police, the FRRO issued the LIN on October 14.The petition claimed the LIN is without reasons and no specific contravention of the provision of the law mentioned. The plea claimed the notice described the petitioner only as a United States national and did not make mention of his OCI designation under the Citizenship Act, 1955, a statutory status that carries a lifelong right of residence in India, therefore, ignoring the fundamental fact reflects "non-application of mind."The plea further claimed the LIN is a "final order" issued without any prior inquiry, show-cause notice or opportunity to respond and 14 days given to leave the country are not a substitute for a hearing.

He added that restriction on gatherings was imposed by a local police order and not an order under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 and the location was not protected or a prohibited place notified by the Central Government under that Act, therefore no condition of OCI status was breached.The plea claimed the actor did not even attempt to enter the barricaded area and was returning to his car on being asked by police to leave and Police apprehended him only after media personnel surrounded him and asked for his remarks.

The actor also claimed participating in a rally or even protesting are not restrictive covenants on any foreigner, let alone an OCI holder and an "unproven and under investigation FIR cannot justify expulsion."He claimed the it was "grossly disproportionate" to direct a lifelong resident to leave India based on "unjust" detention" from which he was released the same evening and if implemented, the notice would cause "irreversible harm" to him.

SPPU students slam girls' hostel time restriction

Female students of Savitribai Phule Pune University main campus have raised objection over a 10:30 pm deadline applicable only to the girls' hostel and not to the boys'. The issue came to light following a recent alleged moral policing incident outside the girls' hostel when two male students asked a female student what she was doing out at night and if she had a late night pass.The university filed an FIR against the two students for criminal trespass, as they had entered the girls' hostel gate illegally and argued with the staff about the same. Students of the girls' hostel had held a protest at the police station before the FIR was filed.

Tanishka Bhandari, a student at the public health department and a member of the Students Federation of India (SFI), said girl students were demanding the same equal rights as boys. "The whole protest that happened recently could have been avoided if there was no in-time. The two male students would not have gotten any chance of asking the girl if she had a late pass," added Bhandari.She said the Jaykar Library at the university was open till 12 am, which makes it difficult for girl students to access them late at night. If girls want to stay out till 12 am, they have to obtain a late pass from the hostel.

Hetavi, a student of the women and gender studies department, said that coming from a background where she had no restrictions to come home at night, shifting to a hostel with such restrictions in place was difficult. Originally from Banaras, she said, "I have worked in the social sector for three years. It is really concerning that if you are a woman, you cannot even visit your campus after 10:30pm. I am also paying for the Jaykar library but I cannot access that and boys can."Pratiksha Navale, a political science student, said inequality was being perpetrated against the girls. "The boys officially have an in-time of 12 but whether they come in or not, there is no problem."Sumedh Chandanshive, an MBA student living at the boys' hostel, confirmed that there were no time restrictions for boys. A member of the University Student Struggle Action Committee, Sumedh said, "We are in support of the girl students demanding equality. If the university says that safety is the reason, it is the university's job to make the campus safe."The RSS affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) said it supported in-time restrictions but said it should apply to the boys' hostel as well. "SPPU is a renowned university that has made scholars, researchers, leaders, since a long time. So when studying here and living in the hostel premises, we should have to maintain the decorum and follow some rules so that everyone stays safe and can focus on studies. Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad supports the same in-time and rules for both boys and girls' hostels," said Nidhi Narang, ABVP Pune city joint secretary.Professor Geeta Shinde, who was recently appointed additional rector of the girls' hostel following the resignation of the previous office bearer, said that a committee had been set up by the Vice Chancellor regarding the recent incident and protest, and that the time restriction would also be raised in the committee. "I will give the input to the committee with the help of the students." she said.

Maharashtra farmer sends Rs 5,000 to Fadnavis over drought relief

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Upset over what he termed "paltry" interim financial assistance announced by the Maharashtra government for drought-hit farmers, a soybean cultivator from Dharashiv district has sent a money order of Rs 5,000 to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis as a mark of protest.Fadnavis announced on Wednesday that an initial relief amount of Rs 5,000 would be transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts ahead of Diwali. The announcement came after more than 85 per cent of talukas in Maharashtra were declared drought-hit.The state government added 40 more talukas to the drought-hit list, taking the total to 305 out of the state's 358 talukas.

Fadnavis said the decision to transfer Rs 5,000 was intended to provide immediate relief before Diwali, as detailed administrative assessments and procedures for a Central government assessment would take time and could not be completed before the festival.Chand Shaikh, a farmer from Surdi village in Dharashiv tehsil, said he had sent a money order of Rs 5,000 to the Chief Minister.Shaikh said he earned only Rs 3,900 from his soybean crop and borrowed Rs 1,100 from a friend to send the money order."I cultivated soybean on 1.5 acres of my farm. I spent Rs 25,000 and harvested just 60 kg. I could earn only Rs 3,900. I borrowed Rs 1,100 from my friend to send the money order," Shaikh told reporters outside the Surdi post office.A man who identified himself as Shaikh's friend said he had lent the farmer Rs 1,100.

Can fill form for new voters: Delhi High Court to petitioners who didn't make it to SIR draft

A petition by a lawyer and his kin, who missed filling up the enumeration forms during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, to get included in voter rolls without registering as fresh voters was recently turned down by the Delhi High Court. The petitioners who have not appeared on the SIR draft, the court underlined, can fill Form 6, and register as fresh voters.

Advocate Nilotpal Datta and his kin had moved the High Court, seeking that Election Commission of India be directed to "recast the procedure governing existing electors who could not be enumerated during the SIR" "…so as to preserve the statutory procedure for correction and transposition of their existing electoral entries, including through Form 8, instead of requiring them to seek fresh inclusion through Form 6." Form 8 allows for the correction in the entries in existing electoral rolls.The petitioners told the High Court that they could not fill the enumeration forms as per the SIR timeline as they had shifted from the old residence, and subsequently, their names got deleted from the electoral rolls for the Capital.Datta, arguing the case in person, had raised an apprehension that if they furnish a Form 6, it would be a false declaration, as Form 6 — the statutory form meant for fresh registration of first-time voters —- seeks a declaration from the applicant that they have never voted before while they had voted earlier.

However, ECI's counsel Sanjay Vashishtha, on the other hand, argued that so far as Form 6 is concerned, it is

with regard to the new roll being prepared for the ongoing SIR process, which effectively means an applicant is a first time voter for the new roll being prepared, and that Form 8 is only for rectification once a voter has been included in the roll or for rectifying details of an existing voter on the roll preceding the SIR exercise.On behalf of the poll body, Vashishtha also submitted that the petitioners' grievances can be redressed by furnishing Form 6.A bench of Justices Dinesh Mehta and Aditi Choudhary on October 14 opined that "when the suggestion is coming from the learned standing counsel appearing for ECI, that too as per the instructions of the Electoral Registration Officer, petitioner's apprehension that he would be accused of furnishing a false declaration is misplaced."

Abhijeet Dipke gets conditional bail after arrest over Connaught Place rally

New Delhi: Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder and convenor Abhijeet Dipke was granted conditional bail by a Delhi court on Saturday following his arrest in connection with the party's 'Lehra Do Tiranga' rally at Central Park in Connaught Place.According to the Delhi Police, Dipke was granted bail by the Special Executive Magistrate court after signing a peace bond.CJP founder Dipke and party leaders Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka had signed similar bonds when they were released following their detention ahead of the October 10 protest.CJP's head of legal affairs, Ratna Singh, confirmed Dipke's release.

In a post on X, she said, "Abhijeet Dipke released."Earlier on Saturday, Singh had complained about delays in court proceedings."The hearing was supposed to happen at 12 p.m. It's 3:38 p.m. and no sign of it. If this isn't deliberate then what is? Release Saurav Das, Ashutosh Ranka and Abhijeet Dipke along with other detainees. You can't take away people's liberty by delaying the entire process," she said in an earlier post on X.Dipke was detained on Friday while on his way to join the protest rally in Connaught Place and was later arrested.All India Students' Association (AISA) president Neha Bora was also detained near Mandi House as police tightened security across central Delhi. She was released shortly after her detention.The CJP had called for a 'Tiranga Assembly' at Central Park in Connaught Place at 5 p.m. on Friday. However, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) denied permission for the event.Ahead of the proposed rally, the Delhi Police had served Dipke two notices, informing him that Connaught Place was not a notified protest site and that the NDMC had not granted permission for the proposed Tiranga Yatra.According to officials, one of the notices was issued on behalf of the New Delhi district authorities under the Delhi Police Act. It instructed people not to visit Central Park, as Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) was in force.A second notice was issued to Dipke by the South West Delhi authorities.

Jamia students on hunger strike over students' union demand face rustication, suspension

The Jamia Millia Islamia administration has rusticated one student, suspended two and imposed a one-year campus ban on all three, who had launched an indefinite hunger strike earlier this week demanding the restoration of the university's students' union.The orders, issued on Friday, stated that Ebin Basil, an LLB student, has been rusticated for one year with immediate effect. The two suspended students are Jasim Khan, a postgraduate student in International Studies at the university's India-Arab Cultural Centre; and Rehaan Haider, an MA Social Work student.

In its order, the administration has accused Basil of participating in an "unauthorised sit-in" at Ghalib Lawn on the campus, obstructing university staff and disrupting the installation of CCTV cameras on October 15. It has alleged that members of the gathering pulled a CCTV camera wire, rendering the system non-functional. It also referred to an earlier protest on September 11, and alleged that Basil and other students had then confronted members of the proctorial team and circulated videos with "misleading accounts" of the incident.Five students, including the three against whom punitive action has been taken, began a hunger strike on October 12 to demand the restoration of the university's student union.In a joint statement on Saturday, after the orders were issued, student organisations in the varsity alleged that "more than 100" security guards entered the protest site in the morning and "manhandled" the students on hunger strike.The action against the three students comes a day after Vice-Chancellor Mazhar Asif and Registrar Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi held a meeting lasting over six hours with elected office-bearers of subject associations from the university's departments and centres. In a statement October 16, the university claimed the meeting provided students with a forum to raise grievances and suggest measures to address their concerns.A university official told The Indian Express, "We don't have an in principle objection to restoring the students' union. If a formal request is made… upon consideration, a committee would need to examine the matter and assess safeguards against incidents of violence before any decision could be taken."The official said the administration viewed subject associations as an established channel for student representation across Jamia's 44 departments and 30 centres, allowing elected office-bearers to raise department-specific concerns with their faculty and administration.The students' union was dissolved in 2006 during the tenure of former Vice-Chancellor Mushirul Hasan. The official cited incidents of alleged violence and clashes involving students and teachers as among the concerns that had shaped the administration's position on restoring a university-wide union. The official also referred to proceedings before the Delhi High Court in 2022, saying the matter had not resulted in a direction to the university to restore the union.

Firecrackers Worth Rs 22.63 Lakh Seized in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Task Force, along with Langer Houz and Goshamahal police, seized firecrackers worth Rs 22.63 lakh in two separate raids on Thursday for allegedly storing fireworks without valid licences.

In Langer Houz, police apprehended Durga Prasad Goud and seized firecrackers worth Rs 2.63 lakh from him.

In a separate raid at Chudi Bazar in Goshamahal, police arrested Rahul Singh, alias Bheem Singh, owner of Jai Durga Traders, and his worker, Parveen Singh.

Police seized 569 cartons of firecrackers and toy guns valued at Rs 20 lakh in the Goshamahal raid.

‘My family has suffered more than me’: A day before his grandmother died, Abhijeet Dipke on the cost of CJP

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) spoke at Loksatta's public dialogue programme. Express Photo By Ganesh ShirsekarAbhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) spoke at Loksatta's public dialogue programme. Express Photo By Ganesh ShirsekarAbhijeet Dipke said this in Mumbai on Friday, less than 24 hours before his grandmother died in the family’s village in Hingoli and he was detained at Delhi airport on his way to the Jantar Mantar protest.

“My mother and father were both admitted to the hospital during the Jantar Mantar protest (in July). I didn’t speak about it anywhere because I didn’t want sympathy. I couldn’t go see them because if I left, they would say ‘Abhijit ran away’,” the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder said at Loksamvad, an interaction organised by Loksatta, The Indian Express group’s Marathi daily.“Even today, I see fear in my mother’s eyes when I step out, whether I’ll return or not. When I left for Bangalore recently, my mother was crying. That is the cost you have to pay today.”On Saturday, Savitribai Shankar Dipke, 85, died at Santuk Pimpri village. His parents, Bhagwan and Anita, left for the village after receiving the news. Dipke was in detention after being picked up from his aircraft at Indira Gandhi International Airport, and there was no word on whether he would be allowed to travel for the last rites.The village is where Dipke keeps returning in conversation. His father became an engineer and moved the family to Sambhajinagar, where Dipke studied at a convent school before going to Pune and then to the United States. His cousins stayed. “One of my brothers goes to work at construction sites, another brother works in the fields, a third is a driver. Now, we come from the same bloodline, the same family,” he said. His aunt still does manual labour in the fields.

“My father studied and became an engineer, I returned from America, but has anything changed on the ground? No, it hasn’t. Our upliftment happened, but the condition in the village remains the same.”He said he spent his holidays in the village, and it was what drew him to the CJP’s campaign on rural and tribal schools. Before the CJP, his ambition had been smaller. “I used to tell my family that I wanted to become the village sarpanch, and they would stay quiet and say, ‘Stay right there!’”When he flew back from the US in July for the first Jantar Mantar protest, he expected to be arrested. “We brought just one small bag from America, thinking why keep three big bags in jail. My other bags are still in the US.”On Saturday morning, in a video recorded inside the aircraft before he was taken off, he told the police, “I have come here to get arrested. Go ahead and arrest me.” His father, speaking before the news from Hingoli, had asked under which law his son was being held. His mother said the family stood by him.

3-way contest or one-sided fight? Gandhinagar civic body to decide

Since its formation (as a municipal corporation) in 2010, Gandhinagar voters have rarely voted one way and defections decided who rules till the previous election in 2021, when the BJP won by a majority. The Congress won the first election in 2011; in the second it was in a tie with the BJP and in 2021 the BJP swept the polls – winning 41 of 44 seats but eventually two of the Congress corporators defected, leaving the lone Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) corporator Tushar Parikh in the Opposition.This time, exercising caution, the Congress shifted all its 44 candidates away to “undisclosed locations” outside Gandhinagar until the deadline for withdrawing nominations. Gandhinagar city Congress president Shaktikumar Patel alleged that all the candidates, their supporters and proposers were shifted to various locations since they were being “pressured to withdraw at the instance of local BJP leaders of their respective areas. They (BJP leaders) were doing this with an intention to win 3-4 wards uncontested.”

Asked how the party would try to ensure that candidates don’t defect after getting elected, Patel said, “We have taken a Bharosa Patra (undertaking of trust) from each of our 44 candidates in the form of an affidavit, stating that they will not defect to the BJP after the election. On the basis of that, I am confident that none of our members will switch sides to the BJP.”Meanwhile, one of the AAP candidates from Ward No. 7, Rahul Vaghela, has declared his support to the BJP. AAP leaders, however, have alleged that he was threatened at the behest of the BJP, following which he has “withdrawn” from the contest. When contacted by The Indian Express, Rahul Vaghela did not elaborate on the reasons for his supporting the BJP.The BJP and Congress are in a direct fight on 12 seats where AAP has no candidates after the State Election Commission rejected four nominations and five withdrew their nominations. The party has not fielded candidates in the remaining three seats. The Congress and BJP have candidates on all 44 seats while AAP has on 32 seats.AAP leaders have alleged that their candidates withdrew nominations “under pressure from the BJP.” The BJP has denied the allegations.Releasing the BJP’s manifesto on Thursday, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi credited the BJP for turning the city’s identity from a “Sachivalay Shaher” (City of the Secretariat) to a “City of Conferences”, referring to the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre which hosts the biennial Vibrant Gujarat Summit. Home to several major universities, Sanghavi said the party would now make it the “sports capital”.Other promises by the BJP include new roads and overbridges, AI-based traffic signals, theme-based urban design to give a unique identity to each sector with special entry gates, special arrangements to make AI, robotics and digital education part of the knowledge economy, library in each village included in GMC, cricket stadium in Randheja and sports complex in Pethapur, development of Ambapur stepwell, development of physiotherapy centres with public-private partnership and animal hostel and hospital.The Congress, on the other hand, has promised to make Gandhinagar “India’s first GenZ city” with sports and other facilities for youth.Its other promises include: No tax if facilities are not provided, free and compulsory education, Tiranga Clinic in each ward, de-addiction centres, rehabilitation before demolition, dedicated buses for women and so on.

The AAP has declared its “guarantees” for the people of Gandhinagar city that include modernisation of all government schools, a clinic on wheels, emergency audit of water and drainage network, free water ATM in each ward, home delivery of birth, death and marriage certificates, priority for Gandhinagar youths in employment at GIFT City and local projects, cut in property tax, free transport in city buses for women, students and senior citizens, and special accommodation for stray cattle.

Founded as a district in 1964, the capital city of Gandhinagar was declared a municipal corporation in 2010 and this is its fourth general election. Gujarat has 16 other municipal corporations of which nine were carved only last year and witnessed their first election along with the older ones in April, all of which the BJP won.As campaigning drew to a close on Friday, former chief minister Shankersinh Vaghela who has been showing interest in joining the Congress, was campaigning for the party on social media. The elections on Sunday will see 130 candidates in the fray for 11 wards with half the seats reserved for women.In the first elections in April 2011, Congress party won 18 of the 33 seats. BJP won 15 seats. However, in a surprise move, Congress’s mayor Mahendrasinh Rana defected to the BJP in October 2012 along with two other members.The Congress lost its majority and the BJP formed the board in the urban local body retaining Rana as mayor.In 2016 elections were held on 32 seats where BJP and Congress won 16 each. However, Congress’s corporator Pravin Patel defected to the BJP, giving the saffron party a crucial edge and majority towards forming the board. Pravin Patel was declared mayor by the BJP.The last elections of GMC were held in April 2021 where BJP won 41 of 44 seats following the delimitation of wards.Congress party could win just two seats whereas AAP won one seat in its debut election. Like before, both the Congress corporators defected to the BJP in 2024.Tushar Parikh, of AAP is the sole opposition member and will again contest from Ward No. 6. Gujarat AAP President Isudan Gadhvi said, “We have been fighting, but the BJP has deployed every method – Saam, Daam, Dand, Bhed (persuasion, inducement, punishment, division) – to threaten candidates and force them to withdraw. (It seems) BJP is not interested in democracy, but in Hitler-shahi.”

Gandhinagar city president of Congress Shakti Kumar Patel alleged corruption and mismanagement of roads, drainage, drinking water etc in the city under BJP rule and expressed confidence of ‘change of power’ in the state capital. He said, “Wherever we go for door-to-door campaigning, people present their problems. Looking at people’s mood, we feel that there is going to be a change of guard in GMC this time.Confirming Vaghela campaigning for Congress, Patel said that the former CM is a senior and popular leader and has conducted one meeting in Ward No. 4. He said that Vaghela’s presence can help the Congress party owing to his popularity.

“They (ruling BJP) have made a mockery of democracy. But we have confidence in the people of Gandhinagar. There is no development in surrounding villages (which have been included in GMC). So, we are confident that people will support AAP. Our (AAP’s) performance will be good,” Gadhvi added.BJP’s Ellisbridge MLA and in-charge for GMC elections Amit Shah said they hold confidence of winning all the seats of the corporation on the basis of works done by them.Shah said, “We have done the work and therefore we hold confidence of winning all the seats.”“In five years, against collection of tax worth Rs 700 crore, developmental works worth Rs 7,000 crore have been done and that is our achievement,” he added.On allegations of corruption and misuse of power aimed at BJP by opposition parties, Shah said, “Their job is to make allegations and our job is to do people’s work and win. Just wait for a few days. Things will be clear on October 13.” The results will be declared on October 13.

Computer scientist, IT pro, former AAP: Meet Ajinkya Shinde, new CJP leader

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Following the detention of the top leadership of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), further protests by the youth platform in the national capital will be led by the CJP’s national organisation in-charge, Ajinkya Shinde.CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke and his senior colleagues Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka were detained by police who entered their aircraft shortly after the flight from Mumbai landed in Delhi around 10.20 am on Saturday (October 10) morning.The three men were whisked away to an undisclosed location. Police sources said they were being held separately from each other.Soon afterward, in a 20-second mobile phone video, Dipke said that Das, Ranka and he had been arrested, and that “from now onwards, Ajinkya will lead the movement.”

The video was released while Dipke was purportedly in detention; however, sources said it could have been pre-recorded. The CJP’s response on this issue is awaited.A resident of Alibaug in Maharashtra, Shinde is a former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) worker who campaigned for the party during the 2016 Goa elections and later worked for AAP in Maharashtra.A computer science graduate, Shinde worked for a Pune-based IT company for several years. He quit a high-paying job in the IT sector before joining AAP following the anti-corruption movement led by Arvind Kejriwal.Shinde has been associated with the CJP since its formation. He participated in the protests in Delhi in June and July against the NEET examination paper leak, and has since become a member of the party’s core team. He currently serves as its national organisation in-charge.

In a video message, Shinde said: “As you may know our three CJP leaders were detained right at Delhi Airport

by the dictatorial Modi-Shah government. This dictatorial government has once again become afraid of the unity of the people of this country. You may remember that the last time the entire country came together at Jantar Mantar [in June-July this year], we shattered the arrogance of the Modi-Shah duo.”“That is why”, Shinde said, “to prevent people from reaching Jantar Mantar again, they stopped trains, shut down bus services, and detained people wherever they were coming from. The fear displayed by Modi and Shah shows that we have already won half the battle. And this is the beginning of a new struggle.”The CJP had called a protest at Jantar Mantar on Saturday (October 10) against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.More than 2,000 people have reportedly been detained in Central Delhi since morning while attempting to march towards Jantar Mantar.Delhi Police said that prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNS had been imposed in Central Delhi, and that permission had not been granted for protests anywhere in the area.

CJP chief Abhijeet Dipke’s grandmother dies, he is detained in Delhi

The grandmother of Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke died at the age of 85 in the family’s native village in Maharashtra’s Hingoli district on Saturday, as he remained in detention after being picked up by the Delhi Police on arrival in the capital for a planned protest.Savitribai Shankar Dipke died at Santuk Pimpri village. Dipke’s parents, Bhagwan and Anita, left for the village after receiving the news, The Indian Express has learned. There was no immediate confirmation of whether Dipke would be released or permitted to travel to Maharashtra for the last rites, or whether he had been informed of the death.

Dipke was detained inside his aircraft shortly after it landed at Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International Airport on Saturday morning. He was travelling from Mumbai with CJP spokespersons Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka for the protest at Jantar Mantar against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.The CJP has been demanding Kumar’s resignation over alleged irregularities in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, under which over 13 crore names were deleted from draft rolls, and over changes to Form 6, the form used to register new voters. Dipke had questioned why police permission was needed to protest at Jantar Mantar, a designated protest site, and said peaceful assembly was a constitutional right.In a video recorded inside the aircraft, Dipke is heard telling police personnel, “I have come here to get arrested. Go ahead and arrest me.” The CJP condemned the detention and demanded the unconditional release of its leaders.Speaking on Saturday, Dipke’s father Bhagwan asked the police to disclose under which law his son had been held. His mother Anita said the family stood by him and supported his work.A day earlier, at Loksamvad in Mumbai, an interaction organised by Loksatta, The Indian Express group’s Marathi daily, Dipke had spoken of what the CJP’s agitation had cost his family.As for my family, my mother and father were both admitted to the hospital during the Jantar Mantar protest. I didn’t speak about it anywhere because I didn’t want sympathy. I couldn’t go see them because if I left, they would say ‘Abhijit ran away.’ My family has suffered more than me. Even today, I see fear in my mother’s eyes when I step out, whether I’ll return or not. When I left for Bangalore recently, my mother was crying. That is the cost you have to pay today,” he said.“But people are tired of living in fear now. On July 20, when kids were beaten and fractured, they came back and sat there on July 21. The fear is gone.”

Stray dog attack leaves four-year-old boy injured in Indervelli

Adilabad: A four-year-old boy sustained serious injuries after being mauled by a pack of stray dogs in Indervelli town on Saturday, triggering panic among residents.Residents said the boy, Sangarshan, was playing in front of his house when the dogs attacked him, injuring his face and hands. He reportedly suffered heavy bleeding before locals rescued him and rushed him to a hospital. His condition was said to be stable.

Residents said they were living in fear because of the stray dog menace in the mandal headquarters. They said they were afraid to walk on the streets and alleged that the problem remained unaddressed despite repeated complaints to officials.They urged the authorities to take immediate steps to address the issue.

AMU Students’ Union polls to be held after 8 years; protesting students burst crackers

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in will hold its students’ union elections on November 5, 2026, after an eight-year gap. The university on Friday announced that vote counting will begin at 7 pm on the same day, following a meeting with students who had been protesting for 20 days.The breakthrough came after extensive negotiations between the university administration and student representatives.Acceding to another major demand by the protesting students, the university removed Proctor Professor Mohammad Naveed Khan from his post and replaced him with Professor Nafees Ahmad Ansari, chairperson of the Department of Political Science.

As soon as the announcement came, AMU students burst firecrackers, carried out victory processions and raised slogans.“With the announcement of the election and the removal of the proctor, we have brought our protest, which had been going on since September 21, to an end. Yasir Fahad, an MA student who was on hunger strike, has also broken his fast. We will be the first university in the state to hold a student union election after such a long gap,” said postgraduate student Abu Maaz, one of the students leading the protest.Vice-Chancellor Professor Naima Khatoon then went to the protest site herself and offered Yasir Fahad a glass of juice, formally bringing his fast to an end.Huzaifa Aamir Rashadi, the outgoing secretary of the AMU Students’ Union, who also visited the campus to back the protesting students, said: “I had gone to support the students who were protesting. I welcome the university’s decision to hold the student union elections. This announcement is a victory for the university’s students.”Maaz said the students started the protest inside the campus after the university administration failed to give any assurance on their demand to hold the student union elections.The same day, Yasir Fahad went on a hunger strike. As the days passed, more students joined the cause. Former students of the university also visited the campus in solidarity with the protest, even as several rounds of talks were being held between the university administration and a students’ delegation.Asked why students were demanding the removal of Proctor Professor Naveed Khan, Maaz said they were dissatisfied with his functioning, alleging that he often acted against students’ interests. He also claimed the proctor used various tactics to pressure them into calling off the protest.In a press note, the university said Professor Javaid Talib of the Department of Law has been appointed chief election officer for the AMU Students’ Union (AMUSU) elections, while Professor Nazia Hasan of the Department of English at Women’s College has been named chief election officer for the elections to the Undergraduate Students’ Union of Women’s College.

South Central Railway transforms 3,730 units under Swachhata Hi Seva campaign

Hyderabad: As part of ‘Swachhata Hi Seva’ campaign, the South Central Railway undertook an extensive cleanliness drive across its railway stations, trains, railway offices, colonies, health units, and other railway premises. The zone laid special focus on strengthening public participation, cleanliness and sustained Swachhata efforts across the railway ecosystem.During the campaign, the zone transformed 3,730 cleanliness target units across Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Nanded Divisions and workshops of the zone surpassing the target set by Railway Board. Nearly 21,458 participants took part in the cleanliness campaign across the SCR jurisdiction and 20 Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs (health camps) were conducted benefiting 813 contractual staff.The SCR is observing ‘Swachhata Pakhwada’ campaign from October 1 to 15 with a focus on achieving visible improvement in cleanliness across all railway premises with special attention on solid waste management.

How Durga Puja at Delhi's CR Park has changed

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Devyani Rudra, 60, recalled her earliest memories of Durga Puja from Chittaranjan Park's J Block: helping her mother, cutting vegetables for bhog — the traditional community meal offered to the Goddess and distributed as prasad — and joining the neighbourhood's cultural programmes.Earlier, only 50 to 100 people would turn up for the pujas," she said.Rudra and her family moved to CR Park from Delhi Cantonment in 1975. Back then, it was known as the East Pakistan Displaced Persons Colony, established as part of the government's rehabilitation efforts for those uprooted by Partition. It housed only 15-20 families, mostly government officials.Chittaranjan Park, Chittaranjan Park Durga Puja, durga puja, durga puja celebrations, Durga Puja pandals, delhi Durga Puja pandals, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Preparations underway at Mela Ground in CR Park.The celebrations later shifted to Mela Ground and the Shiv Mandir in 1976, now known as Kali Mandir.Five decades later, Durga Puja has become a much larger affair. The colony now has nearly 50,000 residents and hosts around 10 major community pujas, besides several private household celebrations. Lakhs of visitors from across Delhi-NCR descend on the neighbourhood.But as the festivities kick off on October 16 this year, some of CR Park's old residents feel the celebrations have moved away from the intimacy of a festival once centred on the community.

What does a puja cost?

At Kali Mandir, the annual Durga Puja budget is around Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.5 crore, while other major CR Park pujas have annual budgets of around Rs 80-90 lakh.

The temporary pandal and tent structure at Kali Mandir alone costs around Rs 25-30 lakh, said Jaya Ray, a member of the Kali Mandir Society and its Durga Puja organising committee.Chittaranjan Park, Chittaranjan Park Durga Puja, durga puja, durga puja celebrations, Durga Puja pandals, delhi Durga Puja pandals, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Preparations underway at Mela Ground in CR Park. The bhog operation costs Rs 30-40 lakh. "The kitchen serves at least 7,000 people within about four hours on a single afternoon, with 300-500 kg of food prepared on 10 wood-burning stoves," Ray added.The five-day cultural programme, featuring dance, music, orchestras and other performances, costs another Rs 5-10 lakh. The Mandir committee also spends on printing, decoration, logistics and the salaries of priests and support staff who work through the year.At other venues, the scale is similarly large.Narayan Dey, secretary of the Mela Ground Durga Puja Samiti, said during the festival, the committee runs a daily langar serving around 10,000 meals. Its pandal has expanded to around 180 feet by 85 feet.Saurav Chakravorty, General Secretary of K-Block Cooperative Ground, said that they see a daily footfall of around 1-1.5 lakh people during the festival while cultural shows feature artists who fly in from Kolkata and Mumbai.

Who pays for the celebrations?

Ray said the celebrations were once funded almost entirely by residents. "In the 1970s and 80s, the celebrations relied entirely on personal resident contributions. We would go door to door collecting chanda. Back then, the pandals cost Rs 1 lakh or Rs 2 lakh. But now, that will not cut it," she said.The major shift came in the early 2000s, when corporate houses and public sector undertakings began sponsoring the pujas.Chittaranjan Park, Chittaranjan Park Durga Puja, durga puja, durga puja celebrations, Durga Puja pandals, delhi Durga Puja pandals, delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs Preparations underway at Mela Ground in CR Park. At Kali Mandir, corporate sponsorships now account for around 70% of the Durga Puja budget, according to the organising committee. Individual resident contributions make up the remaining 30%. Sponsors are given visibility through stalls at the venue, LED screens, backdrops and flexes at the gates.At Mela Ground, Dey said the committee puts up panels within the pandal area carrying the names of sponsors.The scale of the celebrations has also created a wider ecosystem around the festival.Kali Mandir's idol-making workshop, which began in 1972, produced only around three to five idols a year in its early days. By the late 1980s and 1990s, production had risen to around 100 idols.Today, the Kali Mandir workshop, along with its second workshop at Chandralok Cinema in G Block, produces more than 800 idols every year for puja committees across Delhi-NCR, other parts of India and overseas.The idols are made on commission and sold to other puja committees, providing the temple with an additional source of income. While commissioned idols generally cost around Rs 40,000 to Rs 80,000, larger and more elaborate custom installations can cost more than Rs 10 lakh.The workshops also employ artisans and other workers, allowing traditional idol-making expertise to remain within the community.At K-Block, Chakravorty said the idols are constructed completely in-house, from scratch, inside the pandal. At Mela Ground, 250-300 artisans and staff come from outside Bengal to craft the idols on site.The transformation has also brought criticism from some long-time residents.

Rudra called it a commercialisation of the festival. "Earlier, there were just a small number of food stalls. And that too, they were set up at no cost. But now the puja venues charge you in lakhs to put up stalls."She added that cultural programmes used to be conducted by the locals, and then film screenings. "But now, if you see, popular reality show stars and singers fly in for the event, and local talent is no longer promoted. It is more entertainment than the puja itself."The growing crowds and high footfall have also raised safety concerns, Rudra claimed."The bhakti of the festivities is getting lost, and the present generation no longer understands that," she added.

Stabbed 7 times while sealing petrol pump, IOC officer's killing echoes 2005 Manjunath case

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

In a case bearing striking similarities to the 2005 Manjunath murder case in Uttar Pradesh, an Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) field officer was allegedly stabbed seven times during an altercation while he was attempting to seal a non-functional petrol pump in Hingoli district on Tuesday evening. Kurunda police have arrested four people, including a mother and her son, in connection with the murder and are searching for a fifth suspect.The deceased was identified as Mahesh Shelke, who worked as Manager (Retail Sales) and Field Officer with IOC and was posted in Nanded North.According to police, Shelke, along with three to four members of his team, went to the Sai Umesh petrol pump in Ambachondi village in Basmat tehsil on October 6 to officially take over and seal the retail outlet. The pump had remained closed for nearly three months but recently resumed operations.Police said the petrol pump owner was not present at the spot. However, his wife, son and some others were present when the IOC team arrived. An argument broke out, and the situation escalated when the group allegedly began pelting stones at the officials, a senior IPS officer said.During the confrontation, Umesh Pandvir, 24, allegedly attacked Shelke with a knife and stabbed him seven times in the abdomen, chest and back. Shelke died on the spot, and the accused allegedly fled the scene, another officer said.Four persons, identified as Umesh Pandvir; his mother, Lata Sahebrao, 46; Shravan Gangadhar Wakude, 24; and a family friend, were arrested within 12 hours. A team is moving to trace a fifth accused.

The Indian Oil Officers' Association (IOOA) and IOC have demanded a swift investigation and strict action against the accused."The issue has been taken up with the senior-most officials of the Maharashtra Government and Police to ensure swift and strict action against those responsible, in accordance with law. The safety, dignity and security of our energy-sector personnel, who work tirelessly to serve the nation, remain paramount," Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri said on social media platform X.Shanmugam Manjunath, a 27-year-old IOC sales officer, was allegedly shot dead in Uttar Pradesh. Manjunath was killed after he conducted a surprise inspection of one of the outlets allegedly involved in selling adulterated fuel that had resumed operations despite the action.

Caught cheating? Let student finish exam: IIT Bombay panel after suicide

IIT-B student dies by suicide, iit Bombay student dies by suicide, IIT Bombay, IIT Bombay students protest, ChatGPT, examination question paper on ChatGPT, Mumbai news, Maharashtra news, Indian express, current affairsUntil now, the institute followed procedures framed in 2015, which had a single paragraph on what an invigilator should do. With no central monitoring, each department handled cases in its own way, sources said.If a student is caught cheating during an exam, the invigilator should take away the related material and record the incident, but allow the student to complete the paper with a fresh answer booklet. The quick response team (QRT) helpline should be alerted so the student has support after the exam. These are among the proposals put forward by a committee, set up after the recent student suicide at IIT-Bombay, in its interim report, The Indian Express has learnt.

IIT Director Shireesh Kedare had set up the eight-member commitee — four faculty members and four students — to revisit exam conduct rules, days after Sahil Wakode, a Second Year BTech student who was allegedly found using a cellphone during a mid-semester exam, died by suicide on September 18.The aim was to have guidelines in place before the remaining mid-semester papers are held this weekend. The committee presented its interim report at a special meeting of the IIT Senate on Wednesday.The Senate has also decided to go back to the institute's 2015 punishment rules until a new set is drafted, putting on hold the stricter rules it adopted this year. Under the July rules, a student found carrying a phone into an exam got an FR (or "fail and repeat") grade and suspension for a semester. Under the 2015 rules, carrying a phone in the exam hall would mean "loss of one grade", and using it would mean an FR.Students protest against alleged institutional murder as Sahil Wakode, a second-year student of IIT Bombay died by suicide on friday, inside the IIT-B Powai campus in Mumbai on 19 September 2026. (Express photo by Sankhadeep Banerjee) Students protest against alleged institutional murder as Sahil Wakode, a second-year student of IIT Bombay died by suicide on friday, inside the IIT-B Powai campus in Mumbai on 19 September 2026. (Express photo by Sankhadeep Banerjee)A student caught talking to another during an exam got a straight FR under the July rules. In 2015, it meant loss of one grade unless there was other evidence, such as identical answers.The interim report proposes that the invigilator should record the incident in a prescribed form, give the student a chance to give their version, and alert a quick response team (QRT) so the student has support, it has said. Seized items such as phones may be photographed.

The report proposes limits to the invigilator's role. "An important point to note: When a suspected unauthorised

academic practice is noticed, the invigilator's responsibility is to stop that activity, collect related material and record details to the extent possible. Further proceedings will be carried out later by the Disciplinary Action Committee as per norms," it says.Protesting students have alleged procedural lapses in how Wakode's case was handled.The invigilator is to seize the material with as little conversation with the student as possible. If there is doubt about the student's identity, the invigilator can photograph them at the desk, the report says.When the exam ends, the invigilator should fill a form describing the incident and the evidence collected. The student can record their version on another form, at a designated venue with additional staff present. The forms, which the report is prescribing for the first time, are meant to keep a complete record of each case, sources said. These will be sent to the head of the department conducting the course, along with the seized material and the original answer book.When the student leaves the exam hall, the invigilator must alert the QRT helpline, giving the student's name, roll number, course and venue, the report says. The idea is to ensure the student isn't alone after such an incident, sources said.Until now, the institute followed procedures framed in 2015, which had a single paragraph on what an invigilator should do. With no central monitoring, each department handled cases in its own way, sources said.The committee has also proposed stricter exam hall rules. No phones, smartwatches, earphones or other gadgets, and no bags, notes or books will be allowed inside the exam building. Teaching assistants cannot bring phones into the hall. Halls are to be monitored through CCTV, only one student can step out at a time for bio-break, and entry will close 30 minutes after the exam begins.According to sources, members broadly agreed with the report but made several suggestions, and a final version will be prepared once these are considered. Senate meetings are usually open only to members, but given the importance of the matter, all faculty members were invited, sources added.

Leaked papers, cancelled government exams, no new dates: MPSC protests grow in Maharashtra

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Rahul Mahale, 29, had a simple plan: give the State Services Main Exam this month, write the Group-B Main in December, exit the long preparation phase finally, and end the monetary drain it caused on his parents. Then, his hopes vanished.Mahale is among the thousands of aspirants sitting for exams conducted by the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC), who have been protesting in Pune – an MPSC exam hub – since October 2.The exam that Mahale was preparing for, having passed the Prelims for the State Civil Services, has been postponed with no new dates announced, since irregularities were found in tests conducted by the MPSC.

"My demand is that the wrongdoers be removed, and the commission adhere to strict exam schedules and transparent conduct," Mahale says. Topping the demand for him and others is the resignation of MPSC Chairman Vivek Bhimanwar.With the government on the backfoot since the NEET paper leak protests, the Opposition, including the Congress, NCP (SP), Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and the Cockroach Janta Party, has lent its weight to the MPSC protests. Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil has also spoken up for the aspirants.At least one leader of the ruling coalition, Shiv Sena MP Omraje Nimbalkar, has visited the protest site. He promised the aspirants that he would take up their demand to remove the MPSC chief "personally with the CM".On Monday, in one of its biggest concessions to the demands of the aspirants, the Fadnavis government sent a recommendation to Governor Jishnu Dev Varma proposing a committee to examine the conduct of former and incumbent MPSC chairpersons and members.The CM had earlier said Bhimanwar held a "constitutional" post and hence could not be removed arbitrarily. His recommendation to the Governor was made under Article 317 of the Constitution, which deals with the removal and suspension of chairpersons and members of public service commissions.On Wednesday, hearing a petition by some Pune residents, the Bombay High Court said it was the government's duty to ensure that public recruitment exams are conducted impartially, adding: "If they (students) lack opportunities and (believe) there has been hanky panky, they have the right to agitate. Because they have given hours of study… The protesters are students… not anti-social elements."

A drug inspector examOn June 12, results were declared for the drug inspector posts exam conducted by the MPSC in March, selecting 506 applicants for the interview round. A little over a month after the results came out, NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar held a press conference claiming that the paper had been leaked.It took another month before the MPSC admitted this had happened, and on August 25, it cancelled the recruitment process. By then, of the 506 who qualified for the interview stage, interviews had been conducted for 488 and a provisional general merit list of 485 had been declared.Soon after, the State Services Main Exam 2025 conducted by the MPSC in November last year for 139 vacancies, whose result shortlisting candidates for interviews was declared on August 25 this year, came under a cloud. Widespread protests alleged irregularities in the evaluation of questions requiring descriptive answers – a new format introduced only last year – and

questioned the unusual variations in marks.On September 10, Rohit Pawar held another press conference, where he claimed MPSC chief Bhimanwar was close to Fadnavis, and that his record was marked by several controversies.Bhimanwar defended himself saying he took charge of the MPSC only in April this year, and that the alleged irregularities predated his tenure.On September 11, in a further escalation, members of the Maratha outfit Sambhaji Brigade blackened the face of then MPSC secretary Mahendra Harpalkar at the commission's head office in Navi Mumbai.

On September 28, the MPSC announced postponement of the State Services Main Exam 2026, which was to begin on October 3, citing requests from aspirants, parents, student organisations and elected representatives. It also said it would re-evaluate the answer sheets for the 2025 exam, and deferred the Maharashtra Civil Engineering Main Examination 2026 and the Maharashtra Group-B (Non-Gazetted) Main Examination, without announcing revised schedules for any of the three.By mid-August, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had already announced a complete review of the MPSC system. As part of this, a seven-member committee was asked to visit each Revenue Division, consult students, representatives of educational institutions and other stakeholders, and submit a report by the end of the year.With tempers rising, on October 2, the government transferred Harpalkar.While the government seems to have relented on its position regarding Bhimanwar now, the protesters are also divided over their main demands. If for one group, the main thing is the MPSC chief's removal, another wants the descriptive pattern of exams scrapped, while yet another opposes any return to the objective format.One of the members of the second group of protesters, Dhuldev Tele, 27, says the wide variation in the Mains marks showed that the MPSC lacked the mechanism and experts to evaluate descriptive papers fairly.But Amar Khose (21), who says he has spent "lakhs of rupees" preparing for the State Services Main Exam since 2023, is opposed to a change in format. Preparing for an optional subject alone cost him Rs 70,000, he says, and now the MPSC has decided it will not be a part of the 2027 exam. "If the Mains shift to the objective pattern too, it will be a major setback for lakhs like me who have studied hard for the descriptive format," Khose says.Madhuri Netake (29), an aspirant from Karjat, says the cancellations could not have come at a worse time. Most protesters belong to agrarian families from rural regions like Marathwada, Vidarbha and Western Maharashtra, which are already battling drought. "The financial burden is just getting heavier," she says.

Andhra to build houses for poor using 3D concrete-printing technology

Hyderabad: In a first, Andhra Pradesh is set to construct houses for poor families using 3D concrete-printing technology in the state. The Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan laid the foundation stone for the project at Burripalem village in Guntur district on Sunday.

Addressing the gathering, Naidu said initially the Centre approved 75,000 houses for the Telugu state but later it considered the special request from the state government and sanctioned additional three lakh houses for poor families.The chief minister said the state requires a total of nine lakh houses to provide shelter for the homeless people and the NDA-led government is committed to ensuring permanent homes for poor families. Expressing confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Naidu said with the Centre's continued support, Andhra Pradesh would emerge as the country's leading state in infrastructure and rural development.

The project is being implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) 2.0 scheme. As part of the scheme, the state government will construct three lakh houses for the beneficiaries. Guntur district has been selected for the national-level pilot project, with 117 houses to be constructed at a cost of Rs 14 crore at Burripalem and Obulanaidupalem in Tenali mandal. The 3D concrete-printing technology is expected to herald a new era in modernising rural housing. The Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) has been tasked with technical supervision of the project. According to reports, the pilot project will be completed in six months, with 10 days allocated for the construction of each house using this advanced technology.

Woman journalist questioned for seven hours at CCS, BRS alleges harassment

Hyderabad: A woman journalist, Jalli Rekha, was allegedly subjected to prolonged questioning at the Central Crime Station (CCS) in Hyderabad on Wednesday in connection with a case.

According to BRS party leaders and her friends, Jalli Rekha was made to remain at the police station for nearly seven hours and had to wait there with her six-month-old infant and her three-year-old son. The allegations have drawn criticism from BRS leaders, who claimed that the police action amounted to harassment and was intended to intimidate the journalist. They also raised concerns over the implications of the incident for press freedom.

Her friends alleged that CCS personnel had visited Jalli Rekha's residence around midnight on Tuesday to serve a notice directing her to appear for questioning. They claimed that the police personnel who visited the residence were not accompanied by women police personnel.

Zelensky says Trump's Russian diesel deal could prolong Ukraine war

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has strongly criticised US President Donald Trump's agreement allowing Russia to supply diesel to the United States and global markets, arguing that the move would provide Moscow with additional funds to sustain its war against Ukraine and undermine efforts to secure peace.In a lengthy post on social media platform X, Zelensky said allowing Russia to generate revenue through petroleum product exports would strengthen the Kremlin's ability to continue military operations rather than encourage an end to the conflict."Gifts to Putin will not bring peace or any benefit to the civilised world," Zelensky wrote."Russia will 'repay' the diesel with further terror and perfidy. Allowing Russia to sell petroleum products is an investment in a war that must be ended, not prolonged," he added.

Trump on Friday (local time) announced a major agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin under which Moscow would supply millions of tonnes of diesel to the United States and global markets. He said the move would sharply lower fuel prices.The announcement came as a Ukrainian negotiating delegation was in Florida for two days of discussions with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. The talks focused on possible arrangements to end the war, including a proposed ceasefire that would halt attacks on energy infrastructure.In a post on Truth Social on Friday afternoon, Trump described his conversation with Putin as highly successful and outlined the proposed scale of Russian diesel supplies to international markets.

"I have just concluded a highly successful discussion with President Vladimir Putin, of Russia, wherein it was agreed that Russia will immediately supply over 300,000 Tons of Diesel Fuel to the American and Global Marketplace, another 500,000 Tons during the month of November, and 1,000,000 Tons immediately thereafter," Trump wrote.The US Treasury Department also issued a temporary licence easing sanctions on Russian diesel exports, facilitating the proposed supply arrangement.Zelensky questioned the timing of Trump's announcement, particularly as the Ukrainian delegation was engaged in discussions with American officials on ways to end the conflict. He suggested that the Ukrainian team's presence in Florida could be serving as a "smokescreen" for the agreement reached between Washington and Moscow.Speaking to reporters, Zelensky stressed that Ukraine's representatives were in the United States to discuss ways to stop the fighting and secure a ceasefire, making the announcement of the Russian diesel deal particularly concerning for Kyiv.He pointed to the contrast between the ongoing negotiations involving Ukrainian and American officials and the simultaneous communication between Trump and Putin, whom he described as "the leader of this war".Zelensky argued that the revenue Russia would earn from diesel exports could help sustain its military campaign and prolong the suffering caused by the conflict."Means more money for this war, more money to inflict suffering on us, without a doubt," he said, referring to the financial benefits Moscow could obtain from the agreement."It only feeds Putin and gives him the ability to fight even more," Zelensky said, describing the agreement as a "weak decision by strong partners".

Kamala Harris weighs 2028 bid as husband raises concerns: Report

Washington: Former US Vice President Kamala Harris is considering another presidential run in 2028, but her husband, Doug Emhoff, has privately expressed reservations about the prospect. Some Democratic donors have also warned that another campaign would face significant challenges, according to a media report.The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that Emhoff has privately told people he would prefer Harris not to seek the presidency again, although those close to him expect him to support her if she decides to enter the race.

The report, citing people familiar with the conversations, said Harris has been taking steps that could lay the groundwork for another White House campaign, including meeting major donors, hiring political staff and travelling to battleground states to campaign for Democratic candidates ahead of the November midterm elections.Harris, the daughter of an Indian mother and Jamaican father, has publicly maintained that she has not decided whether to make another attempt to become America's first woman president."I have not decided if I'm going to run again," Harris said at an NAACP event in Michigan last month, according to the newspaper."I do sincerely believe '28 won't matter if we don't get through '26," she added, emphasising the importance of the upcoming congressional elections.A spokesman for Harris declined to comment on the Journal's report.Harris was the Democratic presidential nominee in 2024 and lost to Republican Donald Trump.According to the newspaper, some Democratic donors have privately questioned whether Harris should seek the nomination again, while several party figures believe Democrats should consider a fresh candidate in 2028.The report said Emhoff's concerns come after years of supporting Harris through demanding political campaigns and intense public scrutiny.

In her memoir, "107 Days," Harris described the personal toll of the 2024 campaign on their marriage, including the pressure created by political attacks and public criticism.Since leaving Washington, Emhoff has resumed practising law in Los Angeles, while the couple have purchased a home in Malibu.Despite uncertainty surrounding her presidential ambitions, Harris has remained politically active.The Journal reported that she has participated in several private fundraisers in California, including events supporting Wisconsin gubernatorial candidate David Crowley and Nevada gubernatorial candidate Aaron Ford.She also joined a Democratic National Committee mobilisation call involving more than 2,000 volunteers, encouraging campaign workers to reach voters in competitive states.Harris is expected to campaign in Nevada and Georgia, including on behalf of Democratic Senator Jon Ossoff, who is seeking re-election.She has also strengthened her political operation, working with advisers including former ambassador Candace Bond and communications director Eduardo Negrón.The report said Harris has maintained ties with Democratic strategist Brian Fallon, who worked on her 2024 presidential campaign.Her political activities come as several prominent Democrats weigh potential presidential bids.California Governor Gavin Newsom, another possible contender, has said he would not run if Harris entered the race, according to the newspaper.Harris continues to have support among important Democratic constituencies, particularly Black women, and has been campaigning to mobilise voters in competitive states.Democratic strategist Donna Brazile, who remains in contact with Harris, told the Journal that the former vice president was concentrating on helping Democratic candidates in the November elections.Harris served as vice president from 2021 to 2025 under Joe Biden, becoming the first woman, first Black American and first person of South Asian descent to hold the office. Before that, she represented California in the US Senate and served as the state's attorney general.

Elon Musk steps up Ambani criticism, shares reports on Reliance-linked BJP donations

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

New Delhi: Elon Musk has intensified his criticism of industrialist Mukesh Ambani amid delays in the launch of Starlink satellite internet services in India, sharing media reports alleging that a Reliance-funded firm helped boost BJP campaigns on social media and that a Reliance-linked company made substantial political donations to the ruling party.In a post on X on Saturday, Musk shared a 2022 Al Jazeera report titled "How a Reliance-funded firm boosts BJP's campaigns on Facebook" and an archived 2024 report by The Indian Express on Qwik Supply, which reported that the Reliance-linked company donated Rs 385 crore to the BJP and Rs 25 crore to the Shiv Sena through electoral bonds.

The posts follow a series of sharp exchanges over Starlink's entry into India. On Friday, Musk sarcastically addressed Ambani as "Prime Minister Ambani" and accused him of seeking to protect a monopoly by restricting competition."Dear Prime Minister Ambani, Please accept my humble apologies for not realising that you are the real boss of India," Musk wrote, questioning whether Ambani would allow Starlink to compete in the Indian market.Musk also argued that satellite internet could benefit underserved communities, giving children access to education and helping small businesses reach global markets. He said Starlink had helped save lives during natural disasters when other communication systems failed.

Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, meanwhile, maintained that India does not permit monopolies in any sector and that satellite communication licences are granted under a fair and non-discriminatory framework.Speaking at the India Mobile Congress in New Delhi, Scindia said three companies — Starlink, Reliance

Jio's satellite venture Jio Satcom and Bharti-backed Eutelsat OneWeb — had secured satcom licences. Amazon's Project Kuiper has also expressed interest and must follow the prescribed process, he said.The minister clarified that licence holders could begin operations after meeting security requirements and other stipulated conditions, once the government

finalises the spectrum pricing framework.Scindia said the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Department of Telecommunications were nearing a decision on the pricing regime for satellite spectrum.Musk had earlier questioned why Starlink, which he said was licensed in more than 165 countries, had yet to begin operations in India despite spending five years complying with the government's requirements.The dispute has brought renewed attention to competition in India's emerging satellite broadband market, where regulatory approvals, spectrum pricing and security clearances remain key requirements for commercial services.

India warns of fitting response to any terror attack by Pakistan

United Nations: India has warned Pakistan that it will not be deterred by Islamabad's use of nuclear threats to evade the consequences of terrorism and will respond to terror attacks."India will not bow to nuclear blackmail," Anmol Sher Bedi, senior adviser at India's Permanent Mission to the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, said on Friday.He warned Pakistan that "any terrorist attack against India will receive a fitting response" and that India would "make no distinction between those who sponsor terrorism and those who mastermind it".Operation Sindoor, launched last year against terrorist bases in Pakistan, "followed a grave provocation" in the form of the Pahalgam terror attack by Pakistan-based terrorists, who killed 26 civilians, he said."India acted in self-defence," he said, adding that "these actions were measured, targeted, and designed to be non-escalatory"."Nuclear weapons must not be treated as routine instruments of statecraft" and "a posture that relies on nuclear overhang to limit the consequences of subconventional activity raises the risk of escalation and not the prospect of restraint," he said at a meeting of the UN General Assembly's First Committee, which deals with disarmament issues, in New York.He was responding to Tahir Andrabi, Pakistan's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, who spoke at the meeting.Bedi assured the committee that India's nuclear capabilities were not directed at any country and stressed that they "are defensive in nature"."They are shaped by our own security environment," he said.India, unlike Pakistan, has declared a no-first-use policy, meaning it will not be the first to use nuclear weapons against any country.Bedi, who responded strongly to Pakistan, is from Amritsar and secured second rank in the 2016 public service examination. He holds a computer science degree from BITS Pilani and has studied Mandarin in China.He questioned Pakistan's calls for nuclear cooperation, citing the nuclear proliferation network run by Abdul Qadeer Khan, who headed Pakistan's nuclear programme. The network provided nuclear weapons know-how to other countries and traded nuclear material for missile technology with North Korea, he said.Bedi warned countries to safeguard their interests when cooperating with Islamabad on nuclear and military technology."On proliferation, India refers to the history of the AQ Khan network, which contributed to the Security Council Resolution 1540 almost two decades back," he said."This is relevant in the context of demands for unquestioned nuclear cooperation and transfer of advanced weapons and military capabilities," he said.

"We urge all states and all responsible suppliers to exercise the highest degree of vigilance, not because of India, but for their own security," he said.Security Council Resolution 1540, adopted in 2004, is a binding measure prohibiting countries from transferring weapons of mass destruction to terrorists, referred to in the resolution as non-state actors, or enabling them to obtain such weapons. It also established the 1540 Committee to monitor compliance.Bedi said Pakistan's use of repeated crises fuelled by terrorism destabilised the region."In India's experience, crises in the region have tended to follow a recurring pattern: first, provocation; second, denial of responsibility; and third, appeals for restraint once a response has been made," he said."That is how instability becomes useful, and that is how the cycle keeps on repeating," he said.Bedi said this was enabled by Pakistan's system of governance, in which the military wielded real power."Those in power are neither elected by people nor accountable to them, their decisions carry no risk and impose no cost for those who take them," he said. "That is how crisis becomes an instrument of power."The role of the military leadership in Pakistan was highlighted during UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' recent visit to the country, when he met military chief Asim Munir, an unusual step as formal talks with military leaders are not part of his usual itinerary.Bedi said India had put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance because it was signed on the understanding that both sides would maintain trust and cooperation, which Pakistan had undermined.Responding to Andrabi's reference to Kashmir, Bedi said Pakistan raised the issue regardless of the topic under discussion."Jammu and Kashmir is an integral and inalienable part of India. We call for India's illegally occupied territories to be vacated and returned back," he said.

US lawmakers urge FBI chief Kash Patel to cancel reported Russia trip

Washington: Two senior Democratic lawmakers have urged Indian-origin FBI Director Kash Patel to cancel a reported visit to Russia, warning that the trip could expose sensitive American intelligence to espionage and pose serious national security risks amid heightened tensions between Washington and Moscow.Representatives Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, and Jamie Raskin, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, raised their concerns in a letter to Patel made public

The lawmakers questioned why the head of America's premier federal investigative agency would travel to Russia while Washington has imposed sweeping sanctions on Moscow over its war against Ukraine."In the interest of national security, we ask you to reconsider. Call off this trip," the lawmakers wrote.According to their letter, Patel is reportedly planning a two-day visit to Moscow and St Petersburg, where he is expected to be hosted by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the Soviet-era KGB.The lawmakers warned that the FSB has a history of surveillance, cyber espionage and intelligence operations targeting American officials, diplomats and other US personnel.

They also expressed concern over reports that Patel has been pursuing closer cooperation between the FBI and Russian and Chinese law enforcement agencies, including personnel exchanges and intelligence sharing.Such arrangements, they argued, could provide foreign intelligence services with opportunities to penetrate American institutions and obtain sensitive information.The lawmakers questioned whether expanding cooperation with Moscow and Beijing was consistent with the administration's broader national security priorities.Their letter cited reports that Chinese officials had been granted unusual access to American intelligence personnel, diplomatic officials, government facilities and contractors.The allegations concerning the scope of that access were based on previous media reports and were not independently established in the congressional statement.They also cited continuing concerns about Russian cyber operations, election interference and

alleged intelligence assistance to Iran in attacks involving American forces in the Middle East.The letter referred to a reported Russian intelligence-linked plot to assassinate a prominent dissident in Washington.The lawmakers said Patel had challenged US intelligence assessments of Russian interference in American elections in a documentary.They did not provide evidence that Patel had compromised classified information, and the letter did not establish that any security breach had occurred.If Patel proceeds with the visit, Himes and Raskin have demanded a closed-door congressional briefing by 5 pm on October 12.They want details of the FBI's cooperation with Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, including any objections raised internally by intelligence or law enforcement officials.The requested briefing would also examine who proposed the Russia visit, its purpose, Patel's itinerary, planned meetings and the identities of those accompanying him.The lawmakers specifically sought information about measures to protect against Russian espionage, including secure communications and other counterintelligence safeguards.The October 5 letter was released publicly on October 9.Patel, who is of Indian origin, heads the FBI, which is responsible for federal criminal investigations, domestic counterintelligence and counterterrorism operations. The bureau also maintains international law enforcement relationships to address transnational crime and security threats.

Trump defends Russian diesel deal, says US needs oil supplies

Washington: US President Donald Trump thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for a major oil deal involving diesel supplies to the United States, defended the agreement amid criticism from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and kept open the possibility of further military action against Iran.Speaking to reporters at the White House before leaving for a political rally in Syracuse, New York, Trump described the Russian energy agreement as significant for American supplies and global oil markets."By the way, I think you heard about the oil deal with Russia. That is a big deal. That is massive amounts of oil coming into our country. And I want to thank President Putin, to be honest with you," Trump said.

"We have massive amounts of oil being coming into our country and it's diesel, which is what we want. So thank you," he added.Trump's remarks came as a reporter cited criticism from Zelensky, who was described as having called Trump weak over the agreement.Trump defended the need for energy supplies and emphasised the importance of diesel. He also claimed that the agreement was contributing to lower energy prices.

"Look, we need it. Oil prices are already dropping like a rock, so we're very happy to get it," Trump said.Turning to Iran, Trump declined to rule out additional American military action when asked why such action was being linked to the upcoming midterm elections rather than undertaken immediately.Trump portrayed Iran as a country facing severe military and economic difficulties.The military is de-

feated. They have no Navy. They have no Air Force," he said, while also claiming that Iran was experiencing inflation of 300 per cent.Asked separately about a reported attack on an airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Trump expressed disapproval."No good. It's not a good thing. I'm not happy," he said.Trump also addressed questions about the Fort Hood shooter and the possibility of livestreaming his execution.Asked whether he wanted the execution broadcast and whether such footage could be used for extremist propaganda, Trump said he was primarily concerned that the death sentence be carried out."So I really don't care how he goes as long as he goes. And I think that the death penalty is a very worthy way of going for him," he said.

Is social media telling you what to eat? Here's how to access accurate nutritional information

Do you start your mornings with detox water, flax-seeds, chia seeds, eat collagen for skin during the day and add a dose of magnesium for good sleep? If your answer is yes, you are not alone.The global health and wellness market stood at $1.4 trillion in 2024 according to a report by McKinsey, a multinational consulting firm. The report highlighted that people are prioritising wellness more than ever, and are looking for science-backed products. How is wellness and nutrition a central narrative of our conversations these days? Clinical nutritionist Amita Gadre explained: "Today, the ultimate status symbol is health and vitality. Glowing skin, a high-energy lifestyle, and a fit physique are the new aspirations. And social media is the perfect stage for this display."However, in an information-filled world, people are struggling to understand nutrition science, an area of study that is already a complex subject. A recent peer-reviewed study conducted on Indian students highlighted how "social media impacts an individual's eating patterns by acting as a stimulus for immediate consumption of food, cravings and trying trends." Another study from South Africa also found that social media is used to "access and implement nutrition information while showing the inability of participants to assess whether nutrition information on social media is evidence-based and correct." A simple Google search tells us what to eat or drink and how much, for our weight concerns, skin concerns or even conditions such as diabetes. However, this information is not always accurate, as it is sometimes not backed by strong scientific evidence, may promote conflicting views and could even distort scientific findings to promote one particular food item or product. "While social media has raised awareness, it has simultaneously created a "Wild West" of information that has deeply complicated the public's understanding of nutrition," said Ms. Gadre.

So what is the science behind nutrition and food?

Eating five oranges will not give you glowing skin overnightMultiple videos and posts tell how us carrots can help improve increase eyesight, certain seeds can help reduce weight, drinking eight glasses of water helps flush toxins and eating oranges can give one a glow from within. Let us first understand how our body absorbs food. Food is broken into our digestive system when we eat. It starts in the mouth with enzymes in saliva, then moves to the stomach where acids and more enzymes break things down further. The real action happens in the small intestine: this is where nutrients are absorbed through the intestinal lining and enter the bloodstream.

Vikrant Ghanekar, scientific officer, Biology Cell at Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education explained that the small intestine has an extensive supply of blood vessels to facilitate the uptake of nutrients. He added that "excess vitamins, minerals may not give immediate benefits because water-soluble vitamins (Vitamin B and Vitamin C) are lost through body fluids [urine] and excessive oil-soluble vitamins can be harmful for metabolism. Regular supply through fruits and leafy vegetables is enough to maintain a balance," he said.Ms. Gadre explained how eating one food may not immediately impact our health. "Take Vitamin C as an example (from oranges). It is water-soluble, so it is absorbed in the small intestine and carried in the blood. Your body takes only what it needs. The rest is excreted in urine. No amount of oranges can force your skin to glow instantly. Glow comes from a combination of hydration, healthy fats, protein and antioxidants, not just one vitamin. Also, absorption depends on gut health, the presence of other nutrients, and overall balance. So yes, eat your oranges. But also eat your dal, rice, ghee, sabzi, nuts - glow comes from nourishment, not gimmicks."Similarly, the much-talked about link between carrots and eyesight has some basis, but "there's nothing magical about the carrots alone". According to the University of Utah, "Carrots are a super source of beta-carotene—and that's a start. But it takes a whole lot more to protect your irreplaceable vision." Carrots benefit the eyes but they won't reverse or improve vision conditions. What many struggle to understand or often misunderstand, is whether food can cure diseases or medical conditions. Krish Ashok, author of the book Masala Lab explained: "good food provides ingredients for the body's immune system to function at its best (genetically determined) capacity. But beyond that, food cannot act like medicine."It is the same with seeds, spices and water. According to Ms. Gadre, kitchen ingredients such as carom seeds or fennel seeds (ajwain, dalchini, jeera, saunf) are great in culinary doses and have traditional digestive benefits. When asked if they could help lose weight, she said, "To expect them to cure obesity or diabetes is taking it too far. Superfoods don't undo overeating or inactivity. Weight loss and metabolic health require exercise, stress and sleep management and calorie balance." Commenting on daily water requirements, she said, "Hydration is vital, but that 8-glass rule is generic. Overhydration can lead to electrolyte imbalance. A good rule of thumb: drink when you're thirsty, sip more in hot weather or after workouts, and observe your urine color - pale yellow is ideal. Water doesn't flush toxins." The internet's latest obsession

A simple keyword search - 'how to lose weight' unwraps a whole lot. Search results lead to multiple videos explaining how to lose weight with the help of 'natural ozempic'. These videos say that a concoction of vegetables such as cucumber, celery, and bitter gourd constitute 'Nature's Ozempic' and claim that this can lower blood sugar and melt fat. Ozempic is an antidiabetic and anti-obesity medicine which is prescribed under medical supervision for weight management. There are multiple videos promoting juices of certain vegetables and drinking these on empty stomach for weight loss. Ms. Gadre, commenting on this trend, explained: "There is no clinical evidence supporting these drinks for sustainable weight loss. Moreover, Ozempic is a prescription GLP-1 drug used for type 2 diabetes under strict medical supervision. You can't DIY that with karela [bitter gourd]." She further warned that "Overconsumption of raw vegetable juices can cause bloating, nutrient imbalances, risk of kidney stones and even blood sugar dips if not combined with meals."

Hazards of social media-related nutritional informationWhile social media promotes certain foods, it also creates fear around a few food products. This makes understanding what to eat and what not to, more complex. Both sugar and carbohydrates have earned a bad reputation on social media. And while too much of either can be detrimental, many take extreme measures to curb it from their diets. The Mayo Clinic prescribes: "people need at least 130 grams of carbohydrates every day to meet the body's energy needs." A Johns Hopkins blog post on sugar explains, "Our bodies run on sugar. Removing natural sources of sugar and other carbohydrates from your diet — fruits, dairy products and grains — is not a healthy choice". Diets that cut out all carbohydrates and sugars, such as the ketogenic diet, can be harmful to your health, it says.Ms. Gadre added: "Social media thrives on black-and-white thinking. Nutrition science is all about context, dose, and individuality. Is sugar "bad"?

It depends. A spoonful in your chai is vastly different from drinking a litre of soda. The diet that worked for a 22-year-old actor in Bollywood is unlikely to be the right fit for a 45-year-old working mother in Delhi. Genetics, the gut microbiome, lifestyle, stress levels, and cultural background all determine what works for you."A peer-reviewed study conducted in Australia highlighted how social media can be is an unreliable source of nutrition information. It concluded: "Nutrition-related information published by influential Australian Instagram accounts is often inaccurate and of sub-optimal quality."

The nuances of nutrition scienceWhen it comes to a nuanced understanding of nutrition science, randomised controlled trials are the gold standard to understand how and why certain foods get easily absorbed by the body. But a lot of claims are based on observations and observational studies, and therefore cannot be applied to everyone. A study by the American Diabetes Association explores what makes nutrition research so difficult to conduct and interpret. It states: "observational studies have been used to track dietary intake in large numbers of participants and can be used to track such data over many years. Observational studies are not carefully controlled like clinical trials, so their results may be less reliable." The study also highlights that reporting of nutrition research findings can be confusing.

The paradox of market restriction for anti-TB drugs

Tuberculosis (TB) could be drug sensitive (DS TB), which can be treated by a few first-line oral drugs, or drug resistant (DR TB), wherein there is resistance to one or more drugs, making it difficult to treat, potentially leading to more complications and even death. Drugs for any form of TB are provided free of cost through the Indian government's National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP). Newer anti-tubercular (anti-TB) drugs like Bedaquiline, Delamanid and Pretomanid are key drugs that have revolutionised the treatment of DR TB, since they are orally administered and require shorter treatment durations compared to the older regimen of daily injections, which were to be taken for many months. Another key drug is Rifapentine, which is mainly used to prevent TB in people who have come in contact with TB-infected individuals or in people with HIV disease.The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), following a letter from the Central TB Division of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, mooted an important proposition regarding the regulation of newer anti-TB drugs in the private market, in the 66th Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC) meeting held on June 17, 2025. The DCGI is planning to restrict access to the newer anti-TB drugs Bedaquiline, Delamanid, and Pretomanid and Rifapentine by making them conditionally accessible only through NTEP, in adherence to the Standards of TB Care in India. The reasons and implications of this move need to be closely examined.

NTEP has its own exclusive procurement and supply chain management system for anti-TB drugs, laboratory consumables and TB preventive drugs. India, like many countries in the world, procures most of its anti-TB drugs from the Global Drug Facility (GDF), a not-for-profit establishment funded by the Global Fund, along with procurement via domestic funding through the Central Medical Services Society . GDF does not aim to make a profit and therefore provides drugs and consumables at very low prices to countries through bulk procurement. The Central TB Division places an order to GDF at least one year prior by forecasting the need, based on the disease burden in the country. The drugs are then routed through Government Medical Store Depots to State Drug Stores of NTEP, from where they go to District Drug Stores and then down to DOTS centres at Tuberculosis Units and Peripheral Health Institutions. This entire process is managed real-time through a portal called Ni-Kshay Aushadhi, which is accessible only to NTEP personnel. The Central procurement of drugs is based on drug requests received from peripheral health institutions at the grassroots level. Timely online drug requests through the Ni-Kshay Aushadhi portal are imperative for uninterrupted procurement and supply of drugs in NTEP. However, studies have shown the sub-optimal use of the portal in the field owing to various reasons like lack of digital literacy and training of peripheral level staff, portal interface not being user-friendly and stock planning and forecasting not being perceived as a 'felt need' by staff.

A new drug that is developed can be patented by the company that developed it (originators) for a minimum of 20 years. No other company can undertake commercial production of the drug during this period. However, when a drug goes off-patent (expiry of patent period), it can be manufactured by any other pharmaceutical company and can be marketed for use. Patenting was done in the case of Bedaquiline (Johnson & Johnson), Delamanid (Otsuka), Pretomanid (TB Alliance) and Rifapentine (Sanofi) by their originators. These drugs are procured by the government and available only through NTEP to registered beneficiaries.Over the past 5 or 6 years, patents for all these drugs have expired, except for Pretomanid, and several generic pharmaceutical companies like Lupin, Macleods, Natco, etc. have taken up the production of these drugs, leading to lower costs and more availability in the market. Since they are off-patent, these companies could produce them for the open market as well. The easy availability and low prices of antibiotics in the open market drive private prescriptions, often leading to their injudicious use. This, in turn, promotes the emergence of drug-resistant bacterial strains, ultimately rendering these antibiotics ineffective.With the advent of drug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant strains of bacteria, TB treatment is already facing a crisis which warrants the discovery of newer drugs. Hence, the move of DCGI assumes importance in the journey to combat antimicrobial resistance. Making them conditionally accessible through NTEP would ensure rational use of these drugs.

However, there are certain risks to this decision if implemented in the current context. In the event of a break in the supply chain of NTEP, these drugs would become unavailable for the persons with TB (PwTB) who are supposed to take them regularly, most often daily, without missing the doses.A terrible drug stock-out of anti-TB drugs during 2023-24 is an example of this threat. The stock-out affected almost every State in India and occurred both for DS-TB and DR-TB drugs. PwTB and their families had to run from pillar to post to obtain drugs needed daily for even the most common DS-TB regimen. Since the NTEP centres ran out of stock, a few PwTB who could afford it, sourced drugs from the open market. For persons affected by DR-TB, since drugs were available only through NTEP, they had to take incomplete regimens or miss their doses altogether. Lack of an alternative source to obtain drugs can be detrimental for PwTB if similar situations arise in future. Missed or incomplete doses can lead to delays in cure or no cure, increased risk of development of drug resistance and increased out of pocket expenditure for patients. This also leads to loss of trust in government systems built over several years, and in the larger picture, is a deterrent to our goal of TB elimination.

The proposition to make newer anti-TB drugs accessible only through NTEP is a welcome move, provided the government ensures a reliable and uninterrupted supply of drugs through the programme. Similar to how the Ni-Kshay dashboard on real-time disease burden in the country is visible to the public, the Ni-Kshay Aushadhi dashboard depicting available stock of drugs should also be made accessible. This would ensure accountability and help public health advocates to forecast and flag any potential drug stock-outs. A high level of vigilance from civil society is required to ensure that stock-outs at the regional level are predicted, prevented or mitigated.

The existing TB Mukt Panchayat initiative could be leveraged for the involvement of local self-governments (gram panchayats) in doing the same. Accountability of the programme to provide drugs to all beneficiaries can be attained if people in power are also devoted to the cause.The idea to restrict the availability of newer anti-TB drugs therefore, must be implemented after careful planning and adequate groundwork, in order to prevent any interruption of access to eligible individuals.

Some cities in the northwestern, northern Indo-Gangetic Plain shielded from long-range aerosol pollution

A study of 141 cities in India from 2003 to 2020 using satellite-retrieved aerosol data reveals a surprise — aerosol levels were significantly high in 57% of cities compared with the surrounding areas outside the city in south and southeast India, while the converse was true in the case of 43% of cities in northwest and northern Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP) region where the aerosol levels were relatively lower in the cities compared with the surrounding areas.Researchers at the School of Earth, Ocean and Climate Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar, refer to the cities in south and southeast India that show higher aerosol levels than the surrounding areas as Urban Aerosol Pollution Islands. And cities that show relatively lower aerosol levels compared with the surrounding areas are referred to as Urban Aerosol Clean Islands.

In the case of cities referred to as urban aerosol clean islands, the aerosol levels were not uniformly higher in the surrounding areas compared with the city. Instead, the levels were higher in the areas southwest of the city, which are located upstream of the dust flow, while the northeast side of the city located downstream of the dust flow showed less aerosol levels which almost matched the levels seen in the city. "Aerosol coming from outside wasn't adding to the pollution already seen in the cities that we refer to as urban aerosol clean islands. Instead, the cities in northwest and in the northern Indo-Gangetic Plain region were stopping or diverting the incoming aerosol and moving it around the city. We observed areas upstream of the aerosol flow had more aerosol load than the city, while the areas northeast of the city that were located downstream of the flow had less aerosol load. It is a trail going actually downwind for some distance," says Dr. V. Vinoj from IIT Bhubaneswar, and the corresponding author of a paper published on July 16, 2025 in the journal Communications Earth & Environment. "We didn't expect this."

"North Indian cities, despite being blamed for poor air quality, are found to have no consistent 'pollution domes'. Instead, we observed urban clean islands —zones with relatively lower aerosol levels than surrounding areas. We hypothesise this unexpected pattern to be linked to a phenomenon known as urban wind stilling effect," he said.

Wind stilling effectWind stilling effect refers to a weakening of surface winds across highly urbanised cities where the buildings and infrastructure reshape local climates, creating zones of atmospheric stagnation. These zones collectively lead to invisible barriers around the city (in the upwind regions), partially blocking the entry of long-range aerosol pollution, especially mineral dust from the nearby arid regions.Also, cities located in regions with high background pollution tend to slow down the transport of pollutants from outside the city, like the dust from Thar desert or aerosol from biomass burning that are transported from elsewhere. This results in cities having relatively less aerosol loading than the surrounding areas."While external sources still contribute to pollution, this barrier alters how pollutants accumulate and disperse, leading to a deceptive pocket of cleaner air within the city and its downwind regions. In contrast, southern Indian cities, with less influence from transported dust and different meteorology, show traditional pollution domes," Dr. Vinoj explains.Less aerosol load

According to Soumya Sethi, a Ph.D. scholar and the first author of the paper, the study makes it clear that the proposed barrier effect seen in cities does not eliminate pollutant transport into the city but only slows down the transport. In the process, the cities in the northwest and northern Indo-Gangetic Plain have relatively less aerosol load while the surrounding areas witness an increase in pollutant build up.The reason why cities in southern India do not have urban aerosol clean islands is because southern cities don't have any large source of pollutants coming from elsewhere to create a large aerosol background, which will allow us to see this rather invisible dome effect. Instead, we see the urban pollution island because cities are still the dominant source of pollutants, says Dr. Vinoj.The urban clean island effect was not studied during monsoon due to non-availability of data due to clouds and rain.

The study looked at data for other seasons but found the urban clean islands effect was pronounced and clearly observable only during the pre-monsoon period. During other seasons, a large amount of dust or other sources of aerosols being transported long distances is not seen, making it difficult to see the urban aerosol clean islands effect clearly."The pre-monsoon time is when the signature is clear, and the urban clean islands effect becomes clearly visible," he said. The urban clean island effect normally disappears during the post-monsoon but is again seen during winter because of dry conditions but not to the extent that is seen during the pre-monsoon period.The study looked at the high dust case and no dust scenario and found the urban clean island effect became pronounced in many cities in northwest and northern Indo-Gangetic Plain in high dust case but not in the no dust scenario."Our hypothesis is that, irrespective of the season, whenever less transport of aerosol or pollution is happening, you will see urban pollution islands. But whenever the pollution transport from outside is enhanced, you will see a clean island effect," Dr. Vinoj said."There is an invisible barrier that was not noticed earlier. This barrier is seen only when aerosols from biomass burning or dust are transported from elsewhere."In fact, a few studies carried out over global megacities such as Shanghai, Atlanta and a few European cities have observed clean islands, but attributed it to emissions in suburban regions. "

How a simple two-minute walk can help both prevent hypertension and detect it early

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1 in 3 adults globally -- about 1.28 billion people are living with hypertension, with nearly half unaware of it. In India, the burden is steep: over 220 million people live with hypertension, with detection and follow-up rates particularly low among younger adults and in rural populations."Even people in their twenties and thirties are now showing signs of early hypertension," says T.S. Srinath, senior consultant, cardiology, SIMS Hospital, Chennai. "But they don't get tested until symptoms appear, often too late." Therefore, doctors are pointing to an underused yet effective pair of tools -- two minutes of regular movement, and the two-minute walk test (2MWT).Movement as preventive care and diagnostic tool

First, there's movement as medicine. Multiple studies -- including recent ones by the American Heart Association show that two-minute activity breaks taken every 30–60 minutes can significantly reduce average blood pressure and improve vascular health, particularly for desk-bound adults."Physiology is cumulative," explains Surya Prakash S., consultant, Institute of Cardiac Sciences, SRM Global Hospitals. "Even just two minutes of walking every hour helps maintain blood flow, prevents arterial stiffness and reduces stress hormones, all of which matter in long-term BP control."Simple interventions, like walking during phone calls, stair use, or pacing while watching TV -- can yield benefits over time. For a country with growing rates of sedentary behaviour, this offers a low-cost and scalable solution.Then comes the two-minute walk test -- a short submaximal exercise assessment initially used to gauge endurance in elderly or cardiac patients. Today, clinicians are repurposing it to spot early signs of cardiovascular dysfunction, especially in asymptomatic or newly-diagnosed hypertensive individuals."We check how much the blood pressure rises, how fast heart rate recovers, and whether the person reports symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, or breathlessness," explains Madan Mohan B., Interventional Cardiologist at MGM Malar Hospital, Chennai. "A systolic jump over 20 mm Hg or a delayed drop in heart rate after exercise signals poor autonomic control and vascular stress, both early signs of future risk."According to guidelines, a heart rate recovery

of less than 12 bpm in one minute is associated with higher mortality and cardiovascular events.Prakash Ayyadurai, consultant, orthopaedics & sports medicine, explains his clinical experiences in using the 2MWT to uncover exercise intolerance in patients who otherwise present normal resting vitals. "A lot of people pass routine tests but struggle when asked to walk even two minutes," he says."They show palpitations, fatigue, or sweat profusely. That exertion response can reveal hidden prehypertension or vascular rigidity." Similarly, Dr. Srinath notes that in patients with mild or labile hypertension, the 2MWT is useful not only for screening but also for monitoring treatment outcomes. "If BP response improves and heart rate normalises faster over time, it tells us the patient is improving."Doctors emphasise that India must integrate simple physical activity-based screenings into routine health checks -- especially in primary care and semi-urban areas where access to advanced diagnostics is limited."Two minutes of walking can be far more revealing than sitting in a chair for a BP reading," says Dr. Surya Prakash. "The test costs nothing, requires no machines, and adds meaningful insight into cardiovascular fitness." Even if not diagnostic, the test helps triage patients into low, moderate, and high-risk groups for further testing like ambulatory BP monitoring, echocardiography, or stress ECG.While WHO data and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) surveys show India's hypertension burden is high, doctors say the face of the condition is changing ."

How 'honour' killings in India are reinforced and legitimised

Caste in India is not an individual problem — it is a deeply rooted social phenomenon. Caste survives and thrives not just because individuals insist on it, but because families, communities, and entire social structures continue to enforce and legitimise it, knowingly or otherwise.At the heart of this caste endurance lie social customs passed down and protected within households. Children grow up internalising boundaries — who to talk to, who to marry, who to avoid — long before they can even articulate why. As a result, the caste system remains one of the most resilient social frameworks in India.

One of the biggest threats to the rigidity of caste has been social justice interventions. When marginalised communities, particularly Dalits, gain access to quality education and secure meaningful employment, it opens the gates for their integration into mainstream society. With that, a foundational shift begins. No longer confined to the margins, the oppressed now begin to interact with caste-Hindu society on an equal footing — in workplaces, colleges, cities, and most importantly, in relationships. This has created a new frontier of social tension: romantic unions that cross caste lines, especially those involving Dalit men and dominant caste women. These unions represent not just love or rebellion but a direct challenge to centuries-old caste hierarchies. And for many conservative families, that challenge is intolerable.

States like Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Kerala — where Dalit communities have seen relatively greater empowerment — also record higher rates of inter-caste marriages. According to the India Human Development Survey (IHDS-II), the national rate of inter-caste marriages stands at around 5%, but States with empowered Dalit populations show higher numbers. Ironically, these are also the States with increased incidents of honour killings.This paradox reveals a disturbing truth: honour killings occur not where casteism is strongest, but where it is most threatened. In States where the oppressed still maintain their "status quo," violence is less — not because casteism is absent, but because it remains unchallenged. Thus, caste-based violence is not a sign of persistent hierarchy alone, but of hierarchy under siege.When caste killings happen, democratic voices among the public are strong in Tamil Nadu as the State boasts a strong and vibrant civil society. At the same time, caste is glorified on social media. Due to the anonymity such platforms offer, some accounts go so far as to defend caste killings.

How do we understand this paradox?? Perhaps in Tamil Nadu, while people possess a collective consciousness against casteism, shaped by decades of social justice politics, individual attitudes may not always align in the same way. The State's anti-caste culture is collectively progressive but individually conflicted. In public, caste violence is rejected but in private conversations, WhatsApp groups, and through anonymous posts, caste continues to dictate social preferences, marriage alliances, and "honourable behaviour."This paradox does not mean that Tamil Nadu's anti-caste movement is a failure. It means that one is living in a liminal space — between tradition and transformation. What we see on social media is not just caste pride, it's also the fear of losing inherited power and the anxiety of cultural change.

There's a popular belief that the caste system survives mainly because of political parties or caste-based organisations. While these certainly reinforce caste divisions in the public sphere, they are not the roots of the system. Caste survives because it is protected and transmitted within the family. Through everyday customs, rituals, marriage arrangements, social expectations, and inherited prejudices, caste becomes part of a child's consciousness long before they can question it. This is why caste has remained transgenerational, even in the face of rising education,??urbanisation and exposure to new ideas.However, the psychological and cultural importance of the 'family' itself is changing, especially among adolescents. Around the world, particularly in countries like South Korea and Japan, we are seeing dramatic shifts: marriage rates are falling, fertility rates are at historic lows, and the traditional family unit is losing its central place in people's lives. Instead, new models of relationship — open partnerships, cohabitation, single living, and self-parenting — are emerging.India's urban youth are slowly reflecting this trend too. Many adolescents today are increasingly prioritising individual growth, emotional well-being, and autonomy over traditional family obligations. As the value of the family unit weakens, so too does the primary mechanism through which caste is enforced and reproduced.

In other words, if the family becomes less central in shaping relationships and social norms, caste may lose its strongest and oldest vehicle of survival. This doesn't mean that caste will disappear overnight. But it suggests that the cultural infrastructure that sustains it is slowly being dismantled — not by revolution, but by changing lifestyles, shifting emotional priorities, and evolution of the self.Caste in India is at crossroads. On one hand, we see violent reactions and online glorification. On the other, we witness strong democratic voices against honour killings and a new generation slowly withdrawing from social values. Tamil Nadu symbolises this contradiction in its most vivid form — a State where both the loudest resistance to casteism and the quietest internal caste pride coexist. But it also offers hope: if this contradiction is acknowledged, addressed, and challenged, especially through engagement and digital counter-narratives, we may finally move toward a society where caste loses its grip not only on our systems, but on our hearts and minds.

Tier-2 cities emerge as India's new investment hotspots

The 2025 Investment landscape has seen a significant tilt in balance, with more astute investors looking beyond demographic-heavy saturated metro markets to the more compelling growth stories and Alpha markets of Tier 2 cities that have a better potential for returns. This strategic about-face betokens a growing recognition of India's shifting economic geography, where long-held tenets for investment are being reordered by demography, the emergence of new infrastructure, and rapidly changing business tastes that reward nimbleness over sheer bigness.Investor preference in Pune remains at the top as the city has transcended the tag of Mumbai's satellite city and is now recognised as an individual, independent economic connector. The vibrancy of the city's IT industry, top-notch academic institutions and geographical advantage, placed between Mumbai and the Deccan plateau, all add up in its favour.

Smart investors, especially, are targeting upcoming corridors such as Hinjewadi, Wakad and the Pune-Mumbai Expressway belt, where the residential market is giving rental yield returns in the region of 12%-15% year on year. Rental yields in the city are a healthy 3%-4%, much better than sub-2% returns in Mumbai, but with similar lifestyle features and quality of infrastructure on offer.Ahmedabad is now the gem of Gujarat's real estate investment crown, favoured due to the state's business friendly policies and strong growth in its industries. The city's skyline and infrastructure transformation post the Sabarmati Riverfront development, and an impending bullet train connection to Mumbai are drawing large private equity players to Ahmedabad. Locations like Science City, Bopal and Shela have seen tremendous demand from end users as well as investors with property appreciation of 8%-10% annually. The city's rich history of manufacturing, its thriving services market, and its superb access make it an excellent option for those seeking good returns in the long term in a supportive environment for enterprises.

Kochi emerges as the most inviting destination for South India as it holds strategic prominence as a commercial port city and thriving IT destination. A cosmopolitan city with a thriving start-up ecosystem, and an excellent educational infrastructure, the city has attracted investors with its strong investment narrative. Smart investors are moving into pockets such as Kakkanad and Edapally or the fast-evolving suburbs on the NH-47 corridor. While the planned expansion of the Kochi Metro and the planned Kochi-Mangalore Industrial Corridor construction further also will push up boom property prices even further, investment opportunities ahead of the game are especially attractive for the smart developer or buyer.

Madhya Pradesh's commercial capital Indore too has been emerging as a prime investment hub. The city's position as a strategic region, with great local schools and an increasingly robust industry, has made for a consistent housing market both residential and commercial. Investors are especially optimistic about places like Vijay Nagar, Bhawar Kuan, and the under-development Smart City projects, where rise in infrastructure is leading to a significant rise in valuations. Affordable property prices in the city and the high demand for rentals from students and young professionals, make it a good place to dip your toe into the water if you are a first-time property investor.The city has become one of Tamil Nadu's most favoured locations for investment in both textiles and engineering industry. Its proximity to Bangalore, pleasant climate, a growing hub for companies and booming industrial sectors have resulted in high demand for corporate and quality accommodation. Areas such as Peelamedu and Saravanampatti and the IT belt near Tidel Park continue to attract investors, as prices have been on an uptick and rental yields are still a robust 4-5%.

Its unique proposition of planned urbanisation and locational advantage has made it the best performing investment destination in the region of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula, which is also known as Chandigarh Tricity. The tri-city has its own advantages owing to Chandigarh, a Union Territory with good governance and world-class infrastructure (thanks to Le Corbusier's master plan), which will continue to attract premium residents and businesses. The IT City, Mohali, is a hot pick for smart investors, as it is home to leading IT companies, making it an ideal location for commercial or residential investments. Areas such as Phase 11, Sector 88 and New Chandigarh are seeing fantastic appreciation, properties are giving 10%-12% as annual returns. The hills nearby, coupled with new sectors such as 20, 21, and the upcoming residential zones, make Panchkula a town with good potential to grow at affordable entry points.In tricity, the location has loads of offerings which is a balanced mix of urban comforts, greens, revered educational institutions and easy accessibility from Delhi and hill stations thus rendering the tricity a most sought after choice for end-users and investors in the quest for quality life and high returns. The rental market continues to be healthy in the area thanks to a steady flow of IT professionals, government employees, and professionals associated with new business ventures in the CRC, and anticipated kudos from new infrastructure such as airport expansion and better highway connectivity will augment property capital values.A metropolitan lifestyle is possible at relatively less cost and with economic soundness. It's just the right mix of growth opportunity, affordability and quality of life that today's savvy investors are looking for.And as 2025 unfolds, the drive towards Tier-2 level investment is going to consolidate even further, with the pace of infrastructure growth continuing to accelerate, with the other untold story of the year being the push of corporate India no longer confined to metros.The realisation that the next wave of urban expansion of the country is going to be powered by these emerging, dynamic cities that offer lifestyle impetus along with return on investment is beyond obvious.

Biodiversity everywhere is ordered by a common 'hidden' pattern

For almost two centuries, biologists have divided the earth into large biogeographical regions. Each region hosts a unique mix of species shaped by its own history, climate, and barriers, such as oceans and mountains. Because those histories differ, many scientists assumed the inner layout of species inside every region would be idiosyncratic — that South America's biodiversity, for example, would organise itself in a very different way from Africa's.At the same time, global rules clearly exist. Tropical zones almost everywhere teem with life while polar zones host far fewer species. The authors of a new study wondered: could there also be a universal rule inside each biogeographical region, one that transcended continents, oceans, and even entire branches of the tree of life?Answering that question could reveal the basic forces that assemble nature's living mosaics and show conservationists where protection could deliver the biggest payoff.

A new study, authored by scientists in Spain, Sweden, and the UK, reported just such a pattern in the July edition of Nature Ecology & Evolution.According to University of Kashmir Department of Botany assistant professor Irfan Rashid, the study provides a rare, large-scale, data-backed confirmation of a general rule in biogeography.In search of a hidden rule, the researchers cast an exceptionally wide net. They studied more than 30,000 species, including birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, rays, dragonflies, and trees. Information about the species' ranges came from global databases such as the IUCN Red List, BirdLife International, and US Forest inventories. The team also tiled the earth's surface into thousands of cells of equal area — each about 111 sq. ?km for most land animals, for example — and recorded all the species living there.Then the researchers used a network analysis tool called Infomap to group those cells together whose species frequently co-occurred. Each cluster thus became a biogeographical region, and the species most tied to that region were tagged as characteristic, i.e. as belonging to its core community. Species that spilled over from neighbouring regions were called non-characteristic.Finally, they took snapshots of four types of diversity in every cell: species richness (how many characteristic species live here), biota overlap (what fraction of species are non-characteristic); occupancy (how widely do characteristic species range); and endemicity (how much of each characteristic species' range is confined to that region alone).With these four numbers in hand, the researchers ran a clustering algorithm on all the cells. If biodiversity organised itself differently among different kinds of organisms, cells from birds would cluster apart from cells from mammals, and so on. If a common rule existed, however, the algorithm would lump cells from many different taxa together.This is how the researchers were eventually able to split the world into seven repeating biogeographical sectors. More importantly, they found that the sectors appear again and again inside every major region and for every taxonomic group, lining up in a remarkably orderly pattern.The core hotspots were highly rich, highly endemic, and had almost no foreign species. The next inner layers were still species-rich but had slightly more endemic species and slightly more widespread species. The middle layers had no richness and also had some non-characteristic species. Finally, the transition zones were species-poor and packed with wide-ranging generalists from multiple regions.

That is, biodiversity everywhere was organised like an onion: with dense, unique biodiversity at the centre and grading outward towards porous, mixed margins.The researchers also found that in 98% of region-taxon combinations, temperature plus rainfall models could predict which

"We need to look at how changes in rainfall or temperature are affecting biodiversity along mountain slopes," Chawla said. "Small experiments that simulate these changes can give us important insights."

sector a cell belonged to. This implied that only species that could tolerate the local conditions could survive in a given layer.

Further, the species that inhabited the outer layers were also usually subsets, not replacements, of inner-layer species. That is, moving outward from the core, there were fewer specialist species rather than entirely different specialised species."The study provides a strong basis for understanding broad ecological trends," Amit Chawla, Principal Scientist at the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT) in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, said. "It shows how biodiversity tends to spread outward from regional hotspots, and how environmental filters like elevation or climate allow some species to move while blocking others."Geographical gapsIn a time of climate uncertainty, understanding how species are spread can help make smarter decisions about what to protect and where. In the Indian Himalayas, for example, this could mean looking beyond traditional protected areas and focusing on key habitats, altitudinal zones, and natural corridors.

"We need to look at how changes in rainfall or temperature are affecting biodiversity along mountain slopes," Chawla said. "Small experiments that simulate these changes can give us important insights.""The Himalayas are already experiencing rising temperatures and shifting rainfall and are at the frontlines of this change. Studies like this one offer a useful lens to understand the big picture," Asif Bashir Shikari, professor of genetics and plant breeding at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, said.Finally, Chawla did point out that while the study was global in scope,

it had some geographical gaps. "For instance, groups like dragonflies in Eurasia and trees in North America were studied only in limited regions. The conclusions for these taxa could have been stronger with more comprehensive global datasets," he said.He added that some biodiversity-rich regions in the tropics and Global South, including parts of India, were underrepresented for certain taxa, underscoring the need for region-specific research to complement these global findings.In sum, the newly uncovered core-to-transition rule turns the earth's messy quilt of species' ranges into something organised in layers. By identifying how environmental filters shape these layers, the study could give conservationists a sharper lens through which to understand and protect the living planet.

For women, unseen battles at workplace

In today's world, women across all strata of society take up gainful employment and support their families financially. Even a few decades ago, only women who were privileged enough to receive an education entered salaried professions. However, those who remained at home engaged in unpaid labour, such as caregiving and other forms of domestic duties and agricultural work, but were often not acknowledged as making meaningful contributions to their family's welfare. Their strength was exploited without compensation, and their efforts were left unrecognised.

Women have long been treated as the "second sex", denied their basic human rights. Over time, many were conditioned to accept a subordinate status, believing that men were inherently superior and that women's suffering was part of their fate. Traditional Indian families relegated women to tasks such as transferring culture and values to the next generation, denying them the opportunity to hone their skills, explore their interests, and gain knowledge. Generations of women were held back, made to feel inferior, and confined in dark traditions.Fortunately, things have begun to change. Today, women are forging paths of success across all fields. This transformation did not happen overnight. It was built on years of struggle, sacrifice, and silent determination. Many mothers gave up their own dreams so that their daughters could lead independent and empowered lives.But has the change truly taken root? Are women now treated equally as men at the workplace? Who truly cares about the real conditions that working women endure?

While women may now have the "freedom" to work, sadly, the workplace often becomes a second, silent confinement. Here, their wings are clipped, and their voices stifled. They may appear free, but many continue to toil under misogynistic superiors in environments where their dignity is undermined. Women need equality, dignity, and fair treatment. However, a patriarchal mindset persists in many sectors, where women are at the receiving end. If they raise their voices, they risk being fired or penalised. Out of fear, many suffer silently.One of the primary reasons women seek employment is financial independence. Yet, wage disparity remains a grim reality. In many workplaces, mainly in the informal sector, salary structures differ for men and women performing the same tasks. Even when a woman puts in equal efforts as her male co-workers or even more, she is rarely paid equally. The struggle of balancing work and family is another big challenge. Unfortunately, their efforts often go unnoticed. In some establishments, bias exists even in hiring practices. This is an obvious violation of women's rights. Promotions and performance evaluations are often tainted by gender-based discrimination.

India slipped to the 31st position in the Global Gender Gap Index, 2025, according to the World Economic Forum. If such conditions persist, the situation may worsen. Women remain under-represented in key areas such as politics, business, and leadership. While women are often praised as natural multitaskers, the reality is that their labour is undervalued. Some men still cannot accept women as superiors or colleagues on an equal footing.Despite performing the same duties or more, women are rarely acknowledged or appreciated for their efforts. In addition to office work, many bear caregiving responsibilities at home. But do they receive respect, support, or encouragement from male colleagues or partners?Several workplaces lack basic facilities such as clean and accessible toilets. During menstruation, women need proper hygiene infrastructure. Are there enough government provisions ensuring access to sanitary facilities or safe spaces? Do workplaces provide adequate breaks for breastfeeding mothers? Women above the age of 50, especially those working in retail or as support staff, are often forced to stand for long hours. Though laws exist mandating seating arrangements for them, such regulations are often ignored. Speaking up can cost them their jobs, so many continue to suffer in silence. Even more tragically, in some cases, women particularly those in vulnerable financial conditions are forced to compromise their dignity by their superiors. While difficult to acknowledge, this form of exploitation still occurs.

Use ChatGPT as second opinion, not primary source: OpenAI executive

New Delhi: OpenAI's latest language model, GPT-5, may be more powerful and accurate than its predecessors, but the company has warned users not to treat ChatGPT as their main source of information.Nick Turley, Head of ChatGPT, said the AI chatbot should be used as a "second opinion" because it is still prone to mistakes, despite major improvements.In an interview with The Verge, Turley admitted that GPT-5 continues to face the problem of hallucinations, where the system produces information that sounds believable but is factually wrong.

OpenAI says it has reduced such errors significantly, but the model still gives incorrect responses about 10 per cent of the time.Turley stressed that achieving 100 per cent reliability is extremely difficult."Until we are provably more reliable than a human expert across all domains, we'll continue to advise users to double-check the answers," he said."I think people are going to continue to leverage ChatGPT as a second opinion, versus necessarily their primary source of fact," he added.Large language models like GPT-5 are trained to predict words based on patterns in huge datasets.While this makes them excellent at generating natural responses, it also means they can provide false information on unfamiliar topics.To address this, OpenAI has connected ChatGPT to search, allowing users to verify results with external sources.Turley expressed confidence that hallucinations will eventually be solved but cautioned that it will not happen in the near future."I'm confident we'll eventually solve hallucinations, and I'm confident we're not going to do it in the next quarter," he said.Meanwhile, OpenAI continues to expand its ambitions.

Airtel Money begins London trading at $7 bn valuation

Airtel Money, part of Bharti Airtel group controlled by Sunil Mittal and family, began trading on the London Stock Exchange at an implied valuation of 5.3 billion pounds (about $7 billion) as it seeks to expand its digital financial services platform across the continent.Priced at 1.96 pounds apiece, Airtel Money's shares began conditional dealings on the exchange's Main Market under the ticker AMC on October 9. It will start formal unconditional trading from October 14. The initial public offering attracted demand several times the number of shares available, reflecting investor appetite for exposure to Africa's expanding digital payments and financial inclusion markets.Airtel Africa, which is majority-owned by India's Bharti Enterprises, held nearly 78% of Airtel Money before the IPO and has indicated that it intends to remain a long-term shareholder.

The listing provides a public-market route into Airtel Money, which has built its business around making financial services more accessible to millions of people across African markets."This is a landmark moment for Airtel Money," chief executive Ian Ferrao said, describing the London listing as an important new chapter for the business and a reflection of the opportunities ahead.The offer comprises the sale of 270 million existing shares by minority shareholders.Mastercard Asia/Pacific Pte Ltd is making up to a further 27 million shares available through an over-allotment option. If the option is exercised in full, the final offer size will reach 582 million pounds, representing approximately 11% of Airtel Money's share capital at admission.

The company's issued share capital immediately following admission will be 2.7 billion shares.The structure of the offering means the IPO primarily involves existing shareholders selling their holdings rather than the company issuing new shares to raise fresh capital. Consequently, the transaction provides liquidity to selling shareholders and creates a public-market valuation for the business, but does not itself represent a comparable injection of new equity into Airtel Money.The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has been allocated 34.29 million shares at a consideration of £67.2 million, fulfilling its entire commitment under the cornerstone investment agreement.The offer was made to qualified institutional buyers in the United States and institutional investors in the United Kingdom and other international markets, subject to applicable securities regulations.A retail offer was also made available to eligible investors resident and physically present in the UK through participating investment platforms, brokers and wealth managers. Of the 270 million shares sold in the offer, eight million have been allocated to retail investors.For Ferrao, the listing is intended to be a beginning rather than a destination.The company plans to build what he described as Africa's leading digital financial services platform, connecting more individuals and businesses to the formal financial system.In a statement, he also acknowledged the role of customers, employees, agents, partners, governments and central banks in supporting the business and advancing financial inclusion across its markets.Airtel Money, its directors and selling shareholders will also face restrictions on share disposals following admission.The company and selling shareholders will be subject to 180-day lock-up periods, while directors will be subject to 365-day restrictions, subject to specified exceptions and permitted waivers.The London listing marks a significant milestone for Airtel Money as it seeks to translate its established presence in African mobile financial services into a publicly valued digital finance business. Its longer-term prospects will depend on its ability to expand access, deepen customer adoption and convert the growing use of digital financial services into sustainable business growth.

She loved painting, then lost interest: AIIMS doc on unusual signs of depression

Renu used to love painting. Then, suddenly, she stopped. She was also the one who called first, who visited, who showed up. She was surrounded by friends, relatives and the daily noise of a full life. But over a few weeks, that noise began to fade. And Renu, who had once been at the centre of it, began to withdraw. "I used to love painting, but I don't know why I don't feel like doing it anymore," says the 32-year-old homemaker from Faridabad.From the outside, nothing seemed amiss. "People saw me doing my daily activities, but they didn't know the effort I put into doing them," she says. Inside, however, she felt increasingly disconnected from herself. "I feel like I am behind a wall. I feel detached from myself. I can see my life moving, but I am just watching it from afar." Dr Rajesh Sagar, a psychiatrist at AIIMS Delhi, tells The Indian Express that this sense of detachment is a recognised experience in depression, not merely a figure of speech. Patients may describe feeling numb, detached or unreal, as though a pane of glass separates them from the world around them. "Depression is often mistaken for sadness. But Renu's experience was not simply about feeling sad. It was about feeling absent from her own life," he says.

Depression does not always look like sadness; sometimes, it shows up as withdrawing from friends, abandoning hobbies once loved, or finding everyday tasks unusually exhausting. "I cannot say exactly when it began. There was no crisis, no single bad day. Just a heaviness that settled in and stayed. Gradually, waking up became a task. Talking to people became harder still," says Renu. Even the chores she had managed for years began to feel like a steep slope she had to climb every day.The exhaustion of explainingRenu began to retreat into silence. But why? "Explaining why I wasn't feeling well became more tiring than staying alone and quiet," she says. Her mind, meanwhile, never seemed to switch off. "My mind is always on a roll," she says. Her world began to divide into two columns: either she was doing everything right, or she was failing. There seemed to be no middle ground. And a question kept returning to her mind: What's the point?

Dr Sagar explains that all-or-nothing thinking and persistent rumination can accompany depression, making everyday life increasingly exhausting. The more the mind loops through the same thoughts, the less energy a person may have for the things that once brought pleasure. For Renu, painting was one of those things.Clinicians call this loss of interest or pleasure anhedonia. For Renu, it meant something more personal: the thing she had once loved no longer stirred anything in her. The joy had gone quiet. At home, the change was visible and difficult for everyone to navigate. Renu put one part of her experience plainly: "I feel like a burden on my husband." Some days, that feeling deepened into a thought that frightened her — that her family might be better off without her.Dr Sagar says thoughts of this kind can occur in depression. "Renu had no reported history of mania, psychosis or previous psychiatric illness. Something else frightened her, too: what would people say if she sought psychiatric help?"

In India, that hesitation can be a significant barrier to care. The National Mental Health Survey of 2015–16 found a substantial burden of mental health conditions and major gaps in access to treatment. It estimated that nearly 15% of Indian adults required active intervention for one or more mental health conditions, while approximately one in 20 experienced depression. Treatment gaps varied widely across disorders, ranging from around 70% to more than 90%. Stigma remains one of the barriers that can prevent people from seeking help or receiving timely care.Dr Sagar says that when patients come to outpatient departments with symptoms of depression, clinicians need to look beyond a checklist of symptoms and ask questions that invite them to describe their experiences. "In our OPDs, whenever a patient comes to us with symptoms of depression, we ask the standard questions, questions oriented towards their lived experience, like, 'What has this been like for you? What have you lost? What makes it worse? What do you want from treatment?'"That's what helped Renu open up. "Otherwise, everyone kept asking what is wrong with me. I'm always told what to do, but never asked how it feels to be like this." Her words point to a larger question in mental healthcare: what happens when the process of identifying an illness leaves too little room for the person living with it?

"Modern psychiatry rests, rightly, on scientific evaluation: symptom checklists, risk assessment, diagnosis. But in a crowded outpatient department, that evaluation can crowd out the patient's own account, or push it out of the room. Yet it is so important to listen," explains Dr Sagar.

A clinician can assess symptoms and risk. The patient, meanwhile, can describe what the illness has done to her identity, her relationships, her sense of meaning and her control over her own life. In Renu's case, a symptom-focused assessment alone could miss important parts of the picture: her feeling that she had lost herself; the disappearance of pleasure in something she once valued; the strain on her marriage; her sense of being a burden; the stigma she feared; and the emotional detachment that made her feel like a spectator in her own life.Understanding these experiences is not separate from treatment. It can help shape care around what matters to the person receiving it, including her priorities, preferences and hopes for recovery.Ask Renu what getting better looks like, and she does not name a score or a clinical measure. She wants to "feel like myself again". She wants to return to her daily life, regain a sense of control and have a say in decisions about her treatment.For Dr Sagar, this is where a person-centred approach becomes essential: listening without judgement, validating the patient's experience, exploring what the illness means to them, and setting treatment goals together. It also means involving family members when appropriate and helpful, recognising that depression can affect relationships and everybody who provides support.The aim, ultimately, must extend beyond reducing symptoms to helping a person reclaim the parts of life that matter to them. Renu's wish was modest. She just wanted to paint again.

India set to finalise critical mineral stockpiling policy amid supply chain disruptions

The Centre is planning to come up with a new policy on stockpiling of critical minerals within a month amid increasing concerns around supply chain disruptions, and to cut import dependency."We are making very elaborate plans for the stockpiles," said Keshav Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, speaking at India Mines and Minerals Conclave 2026 organised by Industry body ASSOCHAM.The policy is likely to be finalised within a month, he added.

A stockpile is a strategic reserve maintained to ensure an uninterrupted supply of critical minerals.Notably, critical minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earth elements are essential raw materials required to fuel the growth of clean energy technologies and their expanding uses across wind turbines, electricity networks, electric vehicles and battery manufacturing.However, India has little processing capacity for these critical minerals and is 100% import-dependent for most of these minerals. India's efforts to secure critical mineral assets overseas are also facing a series of hurdles.The government's flagship overseas acquisition vehicle, Khanij Bidesh India Ltd (KABIL) has struggled to expand its overseas footprint in mineral-rich countries such as Australia, Vietnam, Mali and Chile, as proposed investments in critical mineral extraction projects have either stalled or fallen through.So far, progress has been limited to Argentina, where it has acquired five lithium brine blocks in Catamarca province.China controls 90% of global critical mineral processing and often uses it as leverage during times of trade tensions.To safeguard the country from any supply disruptions, India's National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) has proposed to develop a National Critical Mineral Stockpile Programme for stockpiling critical and strategic minerals. For the development of such a reserve, the government also commits to allocate Rs 500 crore for the mission period of seven years, from 2024- 25 to 2030-31.The National Critical Minerals Stockpile will have at least 5 critical minerals, designed to mitigate risks from global supply chain disruptions and ensure that essential minerals are available to meet domestic needs during emergencies."A joint initiative between central PSUs or with private companies shall be institutionalised to develop a National Critical Mineral Stockpile Programme, for stockpiling critical and strategic minerals, to guard against supply disruptions and aid mineral supply for domestic utilisation," a government document on NCMM released in 2025 said.Given India's limited critical mineral processing capacity and China's dominance in the sector, the country remains vulnerable to supply disruptions. To address this strategic vulnerability, India is stepping up policy measures to expand domestic processing capacity and reduce its dependence on China.

To boost domestic processing capacity, the government has identified four states — Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Maharashtra — to promote the setting up of critical mineral processing plants.Chandra said that the government plans to develop every park as a complete ecosystem for a particular mineral. Accordingly, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh are looking at rare earth processing, while Odisha and Maharashtra are set to focus on nickel and lithium, respectively.He also stressed the need for developing indigenous technology for critical mineral processing."No country which has actually established their technology in the critical mineral processing and development is ready to share it with any upcoming country. And so the only option left in front of us is to develop our own indigenous technology or get the technology where it is available," he said.He said the government has identified nine Centers of Excellence for this and some of them are making substantial progress.Earlier, Chandra had said that the government is planning to launch a new scheme for lithium and nickel, two critical minerals considered crucial for the battery manufacturing ecosystem.Talk of the scheme to promote the processing of these two minerals has been around for some time. In April, former Mines Secretary Piyush Goyal had said the ministry was in the advanced stages of framing a policy to promote critical mineral processing and had shortlisted two minerals considered critical for electric vehicles, without naming them.

Popping painkillers for 5 years, he needed dialysis: The hidden cost of self-medication

As a nephrologist, few moments in an outpatient clinic are as gut-wrenching as looking at a patient's blood reports and realizing that an avoidable habit may have permanently changed his life. That was precisely the case when Mr S, a 49-year-old farmer from Tiruvannamalai, walked in, complaining of vague tiredness, nausea, vomiting, breathlessness and swollen ankles. He was hoping for a quick treatment that would allow him to get back to work.Instead, his blood tests delivered devastating news. His creatinine—a blood marker doctors use to assess how well the kidneys are filtering waste—was 11.4 mg/dL, against a usual upper limit of around 1.2 mg/dL. An ultrasound showed that both kidneys had become small and severely damaged, with the normal internal structure no longer visible. Mr S had reached end-stage kidney disease. He needed urgent dialysis.

Yet there was no obvious history of the two conditions that commonly damage kidneys over many years: diabetes and uncontrolled high blood pressure. So, we went back through his history. That was when Mr S reached into his pocket and pulled out a worn, unlabelled strip of what he called "vali maathirai"—painkiller tablets.For nearly five years, Mr S had relied on painkillers to get through long days of physical activity at the farm. During ten-hour shifts transplanting paddy under the scorching sun, he would sweat heavily, become dehydrated and develop severe back and body pain. Instead of taking rest or seeking medical advice, he would buy tablets from a local pharmacy whenever the pain became difficult to tolerate. The medicines included diclofenac and aceclofenac, both belonging to a group called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs.Painkillers are not inherently dangerous. The problem is repeated, unsupervised or excessive use, particularly in people whose kidneys are already under stress.

When pain relief starts hurting the kidneysOur kidneys constantly filter blood, remove waste and excess fluid, and help regulate the body's salt and water balance. To perform this job, they need a steady blood supply. The body has a natural mechanism that helps keep the tiny blood vessels feeding the kidneys open, particularly when blood flow is reduced—for example, when a person is dehydrated.NSAIDs interfere with some of the substances involved in this protective mechanism. For someone who is already dehydrated from working for hours in extreme heat, taking an NSAID can put additional stress on the kidneys. The risk becomes greater with high doses and prolonged use.NSAIDs can sometimes cause a sudden fall in kidney function, known as acute kidney injury. Repeated or prolonged injury can contribute to chronic kidney disease and, in severe cases, permanent kidney failure.

Why dehydration worsens mattersWhen we sweat heavily and do not replace enough fluid, the amount of blood reaching the kidneys can fall. Normally, the kidneys have protective mechanisms to cope with this drop in blood flow. NSAIDs can interfere with those mechanisms. That does not mean every person who takes an occasional painkiller will develop kidney disease. But someone who is dehydrated, takes high doses, uses these medicines frequently or already has vulnerable kidneys faces a much greater risk.This is especially relevant to agricultural workers, construction workers, delivery workers and others who spend long hours working outdoors in hot weather.The silent damageUnlike a toothache or a muscle injury, kidney damage often does not announce itself loudly. A person may continue working, eating and living normally while kidney function gradually deteriorates. When symptoms finally appear, they may include persistent fatigue, nausea, vomiting, swelling of the feet or face, reduced urine output, breathlessness, loss of appetite or confusion.By the time symptoms become obvious, substantial kidney function may already have been lost. Chronic kidney damage is often irreversible, although detecting it early can help slow or prevent further deterioration.

Who needs to be particularly careful?

People with existing kidney disease need particular caution with NSAIDs. The risk is also higher among older adults and people with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or dehydration. Another problem is that people may unknowingly take more than one NSAID. Some medicines are sold as combination products, and patients may not realize that two different brands contain similar painkillers.This is why doctors and pharmacists need to know about all the medicines a person is taking, including tablets bought directly from a pharmacy.If you find yourself taking painkillers regularly simply to get through the day, that is a reason to consult a doctor. Persistent swelling of the feet, unusual tiredness, changes in urine, reduced urine output, nausea, vomiting or unexplained breathlessness should also prompt medical attention.People who regularly use painkillers may benefit from simple blood and urine tests to check kidney health. A blood creatinine test, along with an estimate of kidney filtration, can provide important information about kidney function. A urine test can also detect signs of kidney damage.It is important not to create unnecessary fear around pain medicines. They have an important role in treating pain and inflammation and can be appropriate when prescribed for the right patient, at the right dose and for the right duration. The danger comes when these medicines are treated as harmless everyday tablets.If pain keeps returning, the cause needs to be investigated rather than repeatedly masked. Never increase the dose or duration on your own. Ask a doctor or pharmacist whether a particular painkiller is safe for you, especially if you have kidney disease or other medical conditions.

Pregnant women to soon be able to book lower berth online

Apart from such passengers, the combined lower berth quota is also earmarked for senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age & above.Apart from such passengers, the combined lower berth quota is also earmarked for senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age & above. In a relief to pregnant women passengers, the Railway Board has allowed lower berths to be allotted to them through both online and offline booking modes.

The board has asked the Centre For Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) to make necessary modifications in all the online booking portals of Indian Railways to enable the option of lower berth booking to pregnant women.Until now, pregnant women could avail this facility only while booking tickets through offline mode at railway counters, where they had to submit a pregnancy certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner to get a lower berth.

Apart from such passengers, the combined lower berth quota is also earmarked for senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age & above. However, while the option was available on ticket booking portals for senior citizens and women above 45 years, it was not available for pregnant women.While taking the cognisance of the issue, the Delhi High Court issued notice to the Railways on September 16 on a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking online facility for the pregnant women to book lower berths in trains."The matter has been reviewed and it has been decided that pregnant women may also be permitted to avail the facility to book accommodation under combined lower-berth quota through online as well as offline mode of booking, on the lines of the similar facility available to senior citizens and female passengers of 45 years of age and above. The condition of furnishing proof of pregnancy by such passengers while booking a ticket under this quota across the reservation counter, is also dispensed with," said the Board in its order on September 28.While the Railway Board has approved the facility, it may take some time for CRIS and IRCTC to make the necessary changes to their online booking portals and apps.

However, if this category of passengers fails to produce proof, they might face action under the Railway Act."Whenever any person booking accommodation under lower berth quota fails to produce the proof of age (in case of senior citizen & female passengers of 45 years and above) and certificate from registered medical practitioner in case of pregnant women, necessary action as per Section 138 of Railway Act 1989 shall be taken," said the Board.According to the Railways, 6-7 lower berths per coach in sleeper class, 4-5 lower berths per coach in AC 3 tier and 3-4 lower berths per coach in AC 2 tier is earmarked in trains for these passengers. Even if no choice is given, these berths are allotted to senior citizens and female passengers of over 45 years automatically, subject to availability.Apart from this, the facility of reservation quota for Persons with Disabilities is applicable in all mail/express trains, including Rajdhani and Shatabdi-type trains, where four berths in Sleeper Class (including two lower berths), four berths in 3AC/3E (including two lower berths) and four seats in reserved Second Sitting (2S) or air conditioned chair car (CC).Dheeraj Mishra is a Principal Correspondent with the Business Bureau of The Indian Express. He plays a critical role in covering India's massive infrastructure sectors, providing in-depth reporting on the connectivity lifelines of the nation. Expertise & Focus Areas: Mishra's journalism is focused on two of the country's most capital-intensive and public-facing ministries: Ministry of Railways: Tracking the operations, safety, and development of India's vast railway network. Ministry of Road Transport & Highways: Covering policy decisions, infrastructure projects, and highway development

Just install bowling machine: Chahal on flat surfaces having nothing for bowlers

Yuzvendra Chahal India West Indies pitchesShai Hope of West Indies celebrates after scoring a hundred during the 2nd T20I match between India and West Indies at the JSCA International Stadium Complex, India on October 9, 2026.India spinner Yuzvendra Chahal was the latest to raise his voice on the flat pitches served up for the India vs West Indies series, saying these surfaces provide no assistance to the bowlers. This was after India posted 249/5 on the Ranchi pitch which was chased down by the West Indies with a little under 2 overs to spare in the 2nd T20I.

"On such wickets, there's nothing for the bowlers. When the ball gets old, there's dew, the ball comes nicely onto the bat, and the grounds are getting smaller. We've seen this in the IPL as well, with 260 being chased in 19 overs. In this game too, 250 got chased down easily in 18.3 overs," Chahal said on JioStar.

So, what should bowlers do? What is the use of their skill? I feel for them, because I am a bowler too and when I bowl in the IPL, on small grounds with flat wickets, you have an Impact Player as well. Earlier, when the Impact Player rule was not there, you used to see 50 runs in six overs, and 170-180 was a fighting total. But these days, 70-80 runs are scored in the first six overs, and the game is done there itself. So, either you have to have something for the bowlers in the wicket, or else just install a bowling machine," he added.In the match, West Indies skipper Shai Hope led from the front with a belligerent 45-ball 102 as the West Indies pulled off a record chase to humble India by six wickets and level the five-match series at 1-1. Hope, who remained unbeaten after hitting nine sixes and six fours, was well supported by Sherfane Rutherford, who smashed 84 in 37 balls. The West Indies chased down India's total of 249/5 in 18.3 overs.Earlier, opener Sanju Samson blazed away to a 41-ball 82 as India amassed a big total after being sent into bat. India were served well by Ishan Kishan's 22-ball 43, skipper Shreyas Iyer's 18-ball 40 and Tilak Varma's 18-ball 44. Roston Chase was the best West Indies bowler on the night, returning with impressive figures of 3/24 in 4 overs.

'It's a joke': Mumbai legend urges Jaiswal to focus on batting, not wicket-keeping

India Test batter Yashasvi Jaiswal raised eyebrows recently when Mumbai Ranji Trophy captain Siddhesh Lad told reporters that the left-hander has taken up wicket-keeping ahead of the 2026-27 domestic season.Yet to seal his spot across formats, Jaiswal's move to pick up the specialised 'keeping role has triggered discussion online. Three days out from their Ranji Trophy season opener at the Wankhede Stadium, Lad told reporters that Jaiswal was "trying hard" to polish his wicket-keeping skills.

"He wants to eventually, in future, keep wickets for maybe Mumbai or go on to keep wickets for the Indian team, is what he is aiming for. That is what I feel, but I haven't got any clarity on that," the Mumbai captain said.Former India opener and Mumbai batting legend Wasim Jaffer questioned Jaiswal's decision to take up the role at the age of 24."I myself was surprised when I heard this. It is very difficult if you have not kept wickets since childhood. First of all, it is a very demanding job. Apart from that, where is that place even if he starts? There are Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, and Rishabh Pant. I am sure he wants to do it in white-ball cricket," Jaffer said on his YouTube channel.Jaffer said that the wicket-keeping role is a demanding ask on the field in the Test format, and insisted that Jaiswal would find it difficult to adapt without a sound foundation in the role. The record Ranji Trophy run-scorer instead urged Jaiswal to focus on his batting ahead of India's tour to New Zealand next month."It is very difficult in Test cricket. But I feel this is a bit of a joke because wicketkeeping is not an easy task if you have not done it since childhood. It is not an easy skill that you can develop very quickly. I think he is getting a little desperate to get into the white-ball teams. I think he needs to focus on his batting ahead of the Ranji Trophy and the New Zealand tour," Jaffer added.

Manchester City's actions have stained famed rivalry with Liverpool

This fixture comes with an unusual atmosphere of anger, resentment and the feeling of being wronged, not least because of the embattled history between the two, especially in recent years.Liverpool have been beaten to the finish line by Manchester City by a single point on two occasions, in 2018/19 and 2021/2022. City also pipped the Merseyside club to the title by two points in 2013/14.

The games between the teams, particularly when Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola were at the helm, had everything from blitzkrieg counters, to goal-line clearances, to stretching saves. Klopp, one of the pioneers of the Gegenpressing method up against Guardiola's refined possession-based tiki-taka, usually resulted in enthralling matches decided by razor thin margins. In the 21 meetings between the two in the PL, the games averaged 3.2 goalsIn fact, a goalless draw in 2018 was the only one between the pair. But the contest was always so much more than the goals scored. The genuine admiration that both managers had for each other, making small tweaks after every game to hack into the others' system, made the occasion all the more exciting.This is why the revelation that City have been found guilty has stained those contests. In the time period that they are being investigated in, City won 3 PL titles, Liverpool only directly losing out in 2013-14. But it would be hard to justify how years of skirting rules did not directly influence subsequent seasons as well.To play a game of hypotheticals now seems useless. There is no exact number spent on players by City using fraudulent methods, and if those players directly had an impact on City winning three premier league titles.The club has certainly done a good job of making the investigation as tough as possible for the independent commission. According to the Athletic, City "made concerted efforts to stop and frustrate the Premier League investigation," which is why they were additionally charged for non-cooperation as well.

Their manager Enzo Maresca defended the club vehemently saying, "the only thing I can say is what I said already that the reason why I joined the club is because I completely trust, 100 per cent, the owner, the CEO, the sporting director, all the organisation. I don't have any doubts about that." When asked if he feels Pep's achievements while at the club have been tainted, he replied, "absolutely not."The verdict will no doubt be on the City players' minds, the prelude to all their success being considered a sham. Will a Erling Haaland goal on Sunday even be seen as legitimate?Speaking at a press conference, Liverpool boss Andoni Iraola said, "the worst thing probably is the uncertainty, that no one knows what's going to happen." The Spaniard further clarified that, "obviously they (the players) will have their own opinions, but I think they will be fully focused on what happens on the pitch, yes."None of this is fair but the longer the situation goes on, the more unfair it becomes for all the club's facing them. The contest at Anfield features a mostly new cast, many of the players possibly not feeling as strongly about this as their predecessors. Klopp left two years ago while Pep exited just last season, bringing to a close almost a decade of serial winning. The fans, though, are the same.

Will O'Rourke to miss India Tests, New Zealand hoping pacer is fit in time for Australia tour

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

New Zealand fast bowler Will O'Rourke is set to miss the Kiwis' upcoming Test series at home against India. New Zealand Cricket said that the 25-year-old will be sitting out as a precaution as he continues rehabilitate injuries to his left hamstring and calf.The 25-year-old made his return to international cricket earlier this year after a back stress fracture kept him sidelined for seven months. O'Rourke then suffered a hamstring tear on the final day of the third Test against England in June and subsequently strained his calf during training in late August.The two-Test series starts on November 19, with the first match being played in Wellington and the second in Christchurch. This will be preceded by a five-match T20I series and a five-match ODI series. India's tour starts on October 22 while the ODI series, the second leg of the tour, starts on November 4.

"It's obviously disappointing for Will to have to miss such a marquee tour at home against India," said New Zealand head coach Rob Walter. Walter said that O'Rourke was lined up to feature in the ODI and Test series. "…but following subsequent discussions, we all agreed it was best for him to take some more time to rehabilitate both injuries and safely build up his bowling loads," he said.O'Rourke was part of the New Zealand squad that stunned India by beating 3-0 in their tour of the country in late 2024. He picked seven

wickets in that series at an average of 18.42."Our pace bowling resources will be critical over the next few months so we're taking a conservative approach to Will's return to ensure he's fully fit before he takes the field again."New Zealand travel across the Tasman Sea to face Australia in a four-match Test series after India's tour. Walter said that he is hopeful of O'Rourke being fit for the tour. "Ideally he'll be able to return for Canterbury in the Plunket Shield in late December, and in a perfect world he'll be ready to go for the opening Test against Australia in Perth on December 9," he said.

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

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

He couldn't do it at the Paris Olympics after winning bronze because United World Wrestling (UWW) allows only gold medallists to celebrate with the flag."This is the first time I have had my weight under control in the past year. I missed the world championships due to bad health. My weight cut is already tough, and during the Worlds, I couldn't do it because of my stomach issues," Aman told The Indian Express on the sidelines of the Pro Wrestling League season 6 launch event.Aman was suspended by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) last year after he failed to make weight at the Worlds. However, he was later allowed to compete.It was a flawless campaign for Aman, who defeated reigning World Champion Han Chong Song in the final, to claim India's first-ever gold in the men's freestyle 57 kg category.

"Finally, I got to do my favourite celebration. I did that when I became Asian champion in 2023 and but couldn't repeat it in Paris. Subsequently, I didn't play in the 2025 World championships, I am glad that I did that celebration in the Asian Games," Aman laughed.Before the Asian Games, Aman's bouts had a pattern. His bout used to be high scoring and Aman used to concede points early.While his bouts in Aichi Nagoya were high scoring but conceding early points didn't happen this time as the 23-year-old worked on his defence in the past year."Tension ho jaati hai ji points jaldi deke (I get tense if I concede early points)," Aman said. "The idea this time was to take early points and end the match quickly. It happened in a couple of bouts but the final was tricky for me."Aman scored 57 points in four bouts averaging nearly 15 points every bout. Aman's bout against the Japanese wrestler Yamoto Ogawa was particularly entertaining where both wrestlers attacked from the word go but the Indian wrestler came on top with a score of 20-9.However, in the final, Aman took an early lead of 6-2 against Han before conceding five points on a trot. He made a solid comeback after that to win 11-7."He (Han) is the world champion, so I knew that bout will be tough against him. When I was

trailing also, I knew that I could attack as there was time left on the clock. But this win gave me confidence that if I can defeat world champion, I can beat anybody in the world," he said.India's Aman Sehrawat celebrates with the gold medal after winning the men's freestyle 57kg gold medal bout. (Photo: REUTERS) India's Aman Sehrawat celebrates with the gold medal after winning the men's freestyle 57kg gold medal bout. (Photo: REUTERS)Since the arrival of coach Bentinidis Shako as the freestyle team coach, Aman has fine tuned his technique. "Coach Shako's inputs are really helpful. He showed me how to control attacking positions when opponents have good defence. We worked on not giving away early points by being patient on the mat. I think these things helped me a lot," Aman explained.While Aman has got the big Asian Games medal, it is yet to be seen if he will participate in the upcoming World Championships starting from October 24.We haven't decided yet. The coaches will take a call. The gap between both events is very less and the weight cut is something that needs to be done perfectly. I don't want to repeat the 2025 incident," said Aman.

Along with the weight cut, the focus will be on the upcoming year that will serve as the qualifier for the 2028 LA Olympics."I think we will focus on the qualification year. I would want Aman to seize the first opportunity available, so his body can rest and avoid the gruelling schedule of both world and continental qualifiers," coach Shako said.Aman already has the big two medals, — the Olympics and Asian Games, around his neck. He will have to wait a bit longer for the third major medal if he decides to skip the World championships.

'It's a joke': Mumbai legend urges Jaiswal to focus on batting, not wicket-keeping

GNS News Agency, Oct 17

India Test batter Yashasvi Jaiswal raised eyebrows recently when Mumbai Ranji Trophy captain Siddhesh Lad told reporters that the left-hander has taken up wicket-keeping ahead of the 2026-27 domestic season.Yet to seal his spot across formats, Jaiswal's move to pick up the specialised 'keeping role has triggered discussion online. Three days out from their Ranji Trophy season opener at the Wankhede Stadium, Lad told reporters that Jaiswal was "trying hard" to polish his wicket-keeping skills."He wants to eventually, in future, keep wickets for maybe Mumbai or go on to keep wickets for the Indian team, is what he is aiming for. That is what I feel, but I haven't got any clarity on that," the Mumbai captain said.

Former India opener and Mumbai batting legend Wasim Jaffer questioned Jaiswal's decision to take up the role at the age of 24."I myself was surprised when I heard this. It is very difficult if you have not kept wickets since childhood. First of all, it is a very demanding job. Apart from that, where is that place even if he starts? There are Ishan Kishan, Sanju Samson, and Rishabh Pant. I am sure he wants to do it in white-ball cricket," Jaffer said on his YouTube channel.Jaffer said that the wicket-keeping role is a demanding ask on the field in the Test format, and insisted that Jaiswal would find it difficult to adapt without a sound foundation in the role. The record Ranji Trophy run-scorer instead urged Jaiswal to focus on his batting ahead of India's tour to New Zealand next month."It is very difficult in Test cricket. But I feel this is a bit of a joke because wicketkeeping is not an easy task if you have not done it since childhood. It is not an easy skill that you can develop very quickly. I think he is getting a little desperate to get into the white-ball teams. I think he needs to focus on his batting ahead of the Ranji Trophy and the New Zealand tour," Jaffer added.

Nagole teenager Navjyot earns world record recognition for karate endurance challenge

Hyderabad: Thirteen-year-old martial artist Navjyot Singh Thakur, from Nagole in Hyderabad, has completed 50 consecutive full-contact karate fights in the Senkoukai 50-Fight Full-Contact Endurance Challenge, earning recognition from the London Book of World Records.

Navjyot trains under Grandmaster Shaswat Kumar, an Indian martial artist known in the international martial arts community as the "Pioneer of Modern Combat Karate". Under his guidance, Navjyot has demonstrated courage, discipline, physical endurance and dedication to martial arts.In 2025, Grandmaster Shaswat Kumar achieved an unbeaten record of 108 consecutive full-contact fight victories, finishing with a record of 108–0. Inspired by his achievements and training, Navjyot took up the demanding endurance challenge and completed it at the age of 13.

With this achievement, Navjyot has been recognised as the first teenage girl to complete 50 consecutive full-contact karate fights in the Senkoukai 50-Fight Full-Contact Endurance Challenge.

Amandeep Johl elected Captain of Delhi Golf Club

Hyderabad: The Delhi Golf Club, one of India's most prestigious sporting institutions, has ushered in a new chapter with the election of a leadership team distinguished by sporting excellence, institutional experience and a collective commitment to the Club's future.The recently concluded Club elections have brought together an accomplished group of national champions, international sportspersons, professional golfers, coaches and experienced individuals, united by a shared commitment to preserving the Club's rich legacy while taking it to greater heights.Amandeep Johl, the newly elected Captain, is a former National Golf Champion, national coach and professional golfer, with an association spanning five decades in the sport.He is joined by an equally distinguished group of sporting personalities.Gaurav Ghei is a highly accomplished professional golfer and the first Indian to compete in a men's Major Golf Championship, with a distinguished international professional career.Mansher Singh is an Arjuna Awardee and celebrated international shooting champion who has represented India at the highest levels.Karan Atwal is a former Junior National Golf Champion with a strong competitive golfing background.Vikram Sethi is a former National Golf Coach with extensive experience in coaching and developing golfing talent.The newly elected committee is further strengthened by government nominees and other experienced members who bring valuable institutional knowledge, diverse perspectives and expertise in administration and governance.Amandeep Johl, Captain of the Delhi Golf Club, said, "This committee brings together accomplished sportspersons who have competed, coached and represented India at the highest levels. Our endeavour is to combine this wealth of sporting experience with sound governance

How SS Rajamouli's story telling leapt towards Varanasi

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

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

Baahubali: building a world that does not existSix years later, SS Rajamouli built a world from nothing. Mahishmati, the kingdom at the centre of Baahubali was entirely invented: its architecture, its politics, its military formations, its waterfall, its people.The two Baahubali films, The Beginning and The Conclusion, required Rajamouli to create a civilisation that felt ancient and lived in, not just a set that looked old. The production design, the costumes, the weapons, the social hierarchy, the religious iconography, all of it had to be internally consistent. If a character wore a particular style of armour, the audience needed to believe that armour was forged in the same world where the waterfall existed and the kingdom held court.World-building at Rajamouli's level means creating rules, rules about how the world operates, what its values are, what its conflicts are, and then telling a story that both respects and tests those rules. Baahubali's central question, "Why did Kattappa kill Baahubali?", only works because the world is coherent enough for the audience to believe in the stakes. If the kingdom feels fake, the betrayal feels fake.RRR introduced yet another technique. SS Rajamouli took two real historical figures, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem, and imagined a friendship between them that never happened. The film was set in 1920s colonial India, but the story was entirely fictional. The British officers were real types, not real people. The oppression was historically accurate, the resistance, however, was fantasised.The skill here was different from both Magadheera and Baahubali. It was not about managing two timelines or building a world from scratch. It was about taking history as a canvas and painting fiction on top of it, convincingly enough that the audience does not question where fact ends and imagination begins.

After RRR, Rajamouli had mastered three distinct narrative techniques: dual timelines (Magadheera), world-building (Baahubali) and alternate history (RRR). The question became: what happens when you combine all three? The answer is Varanasi.Varanasi: where everything convergesBased on what has been revealed through the title launch teaser, leaked synopses, production reports and SS Rajamouli's own comments, Varanasi operates on every storytelling technique Rajamouli has previously explored, plus one he has never attempted.The film spans multiple timelines. Not two, as in Magadheera, but potentially several, ranging from ancient Vedic and Puranic periods to the present day. Reports indicate the narrative moves across thousands of years, connecting events in antiquity to a contemporary crisis involving an asteroid heading toward the city of Varanasi.It builds a world from scratch. The production has recreated Varanasi on a massive scale in Hyderabad rather than shooting in the actual city, suggesting the film depicts versions of Varanasi across different historical periods that no longer exist and therefore cannot be filmed on location. According to multiple reports, the same set will be used to represent the city across multiple time periods, with modifications for each era. This is Baahubali-level world-building, except the world being built is based on a real city, reimagined across centuries.Mahesh Babu's character Rudhra is reportedly an archaeologist and a Shiva devotee who embarks on a quest for a cosmic artefact. He is also described as "an avatar of Rama," suggesting the film blends Hindu mythology with its historical and scientific narrative. The mythological elements are being treated not as religious iconography but as narrative material, the same way RRR treated the freedom struggle as material for an action bromance rather than a history lesson.The difference between Varanasi and everything SS Rajamouli has done before is complexity. Magadheera had two timelines, Varanasi may have more than two. Baahubali built one world, Varanasi is building the same world across multiple versions of itself. RRR took a single historical period and fictionalised it, Varanasi appears to take multiple periods, connect them through mythology, layer time travel on top, and then ask a modern character to make sense of all of it.Varanasi releases worldwide on April 7, 2027. It will release in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam and multiple international languages. It will be projected in IMAX.The question is not whether it will be big. The question now is whether bringing together all the storytelling techniques Rajamouli has mastered, from dual timelines and world-building to alternate history, time travel, fictional languages and mythology, on a scale spanning multiple continents, will result in his greatest film yet or prove too ambitious for its own good.Every step of the staircase has worked so far. If you look at it, Magadheera worked, Baahubali worked and RRR worked. Each was bigger, more complex and more ambitious than the last film. Each succeeded beyond what anyone thought possible.Varanasi is the step where the staircase ends and the building begins. If it works, it will be the most complex narrative ever attempted in Indian cinema. If it does not, it will be the film where Rajamouli's ambition finally exceeded his ability to execute.

'Sanjay Khan had no right to raise his hand on Zeenat Aman': Raza Murad recalls turbulent phase

Veteran actor Raza Murad has opened up about his cousin Zeenat Aman's personal life, recalling her lonely childhood following her parents' separation, the alleged violent incident involving actor Sanjay Khan that reportedly affected her right eye, and her marriage to actor Mazhar Khan.In a conversation with Vickey Lalwani on his podcast, Raza shared details about Zeenat's family background and spoke about the difficulties she experienced in her personal relationships. He also spoke about her marriage to Mazhar.

Speaking about his relationship with Zeenat Aman, he explained that Zeenat's father and his mother were siblings, making the two first cousins. He also said that her nickname was Babbushah.Recalling her childhood, Raza said Zeenat's parents separated when she was young, and she spent time living with both of them. He suggested that the separation had an impact on her childhood, particularly because she was an only child."Unfortunately, her parents separated. The effects of growing up in a broken home inevitably fall on children. She would stay with her father, and then her mother would take her away. She loved her father a lot, and he loved her dearly too," he said, recalling those years.Raza further shared that Zeenat was sent to a convent school in Panchgani, where she felt quite lonely. With her parents living separately and eventually marrying other people, she grew up without a stable family environment."She was a single child, and her parents had separated, so a sense of loneliness naturally crept in. She did not get to experience a settled family environment. Her mother lived separately, and her father lived separately," he added.Raza also spoke about the widely reported incident involving Zeenat Aman and Sanjay Khan, which allegedly left the actress with lasting damage to her right eye.According to Raza, Zeenat had travelled from Lonavala to Mumbai before a confrontation with Sanjay at a hotel. He said the incident involved violence and affected her eye."She had rushed from Lonavala to Mumbai, and a confrontation took place there. It was a violent incident, because of which her eye was affected," Raza said.

Speaking about relationships involving married partners, Raza said people should consider the potential consequences before entering such a relationship. Sanjay was married to Zarine Khan at the time."When you marry someone who is already married and has children, you have to think about it. You also need to prepare yourself mentally for the repercussions," he said.He went on to stress that violence against women is unacceptable, regardless of the circumstances."Whatever happened was wrong. You have no right to raise your hand against a woman," Raza said.The incident has been reported extensively over the years. Zeenat and Sanjay were married in 1978, but their marriage was short-lived. Sanjay Khan's daughter Farah had previously confirmed that her father had indeed married Zeenat while was already married to her mother Zarine. Reports have linked the assault to an incident at a Mumbai hotel, where Zeenat reportedly sustained serious injuries to her right eye.Over the years, Zeenat has spoken about experiencing physical abuse without naming the person involved in some of her public remarks. In a 1999 appearance on Simi Garewal's show, Rendezvous with Simi Garewal, she described how she dealt with the painful experience."For many years, in my mind, it's been obliterated because I think that's what the human mind does. When there is something distinctly unpleasant, you just close your mind to it and pretend that it never happened and you promise yourself that it will never happen again. And that's how you cope," she said.Zeenat has also spoken about the lasting impact of her eye injury. In a later Instagram post, she explained that the injury had caused her eyelid to droop and obstructed her vision.Sanjay, however, has denied the allegations surrounding the assault and has disputed the claim that he was responsible for her eye condition.Speaking to Hrishikesh Kannan while discussing his autobiography, The Best Mistakes of My Life, Sanjay described the allegations as a one-sided account."I was so pained and horrified with the one-sidedness of the entire story because nobody even asked me what happened. This was a well planned PR attack against me which came like a blitzkrieg," he said.He also rejected the allegation that he had slapped Zeenat and attributed her eye condition to heredity.

"If you see '81, '82, '83, '84, she has done several films. There is evidence to the fact that she has perfect eyes. Later on in life she became a little squint because her mother was squint a little bit. It was a hereditary thing that was labelled one me that I slapped her, I never slapped her, and this was blasphemy," he said.Raza Murad recalls Zeenat Aman's marriage to Mazhar KhanRaza also spoke about Zeenat's marriage to actor Mazhar Khan, revealing that he had known Mazhar personally and considered him a close friend.Recalling how he learnt about their relationship, Raza said he knew the two were close but was surprised when he heard that they had married."Mazhar was a very good friend of mine. One day, I learnt that she had married Mazhar. I knew they were close to each other, but I did not know they would get married," he said.Raza further noted that Mazhar had been married before his relationship with Zeenat.Raza recalled that Mazhar's health began to deteriorate around a year and a half after the wedding, and that he never fully recovered."About a year and a half after the marriage, Mazhar's health began to deteriorate, and he never recovered," he said.Zeenat married Mazhar in 1985, and the couple had two sons, Azaan and Zahaan. However, Zeenat later described the marriage as a difficult period in her life.In an earlier interview with Simi Garewal, Zeenat spoke about how difficult it was to leave the relationship after spending years trying to support her husband and care for him."The first year after marriage, I realised I had made a mistake but since I had made the decision and done it against everybody's will, I decided to live by it and make it work," she said.Zeenat later spoke about the years she spent caring for Mazhar, including taking him to hospitals across Mumbai and learning to manage aspects of his medical treatment herself."I tried everything under the sun. We were in and out of every hospital in Mumbai. I learned how to give injections, to do dressing, was living with a bag outside his body for 18 months, I learned how to change that bag. I did everything there was to do," she recalled.Mazhar died in Mumbai on September 16, 1998, at the age of 43, following kidney failure. Zeenat married never again.

'TV channels wanted me to ridicule Katrina Kaif over her Hindi,' recalls Maniesh Paul

When Katrina Kaif was relatively new to the film industry, she didn't have a very strong command over Hindi as she was still in the process of learning the language. And at the time, she was often ridiculed at reality shows and events for her limited command over the language. Hosts would frequently ask her to pronounce Hindi words, in an attempt to mock her leaving Katrina a little uncomfortable. Actor-host Maniesh Paul recently revealed that he made sure that Katrina was never mocked at an event that was being hosted by him, and this eventually the two ended up becoming friends.Recalling his journey from being Katrina's fan to becoming one of her good friends, Maniesh recalled working with her on Tees Maar Khan. He shared with Zoom, "It was the first time I worked in a film where Katrina was there." He added, "And I very well remember that I was extremely overjoyed whenever Katrina would come. Now, she is a friend. But during those days, we would fight about who would get to interview her. She is really warm. She is amazing."He also recalled how comfortable Katrina felt when he was hosting an event where she was performing. "Back then, when I would host a lot of shows and Katrina would come on every award night show. And she would feel very comfortable when I would be there. I will tell you why, because I never ridiculed her Hindi. I would, in fact, think it was a very boring concept. She doesn't know Hindi, don't overdo it or embarrass her by saying things like, 'Yeh bolke dikhao,'" he said.Maniesh revealed that television channels would often pressure hosts to include such segments in their shows. "A lot of times, the channel would ask us to do all that, but I would always refuse. Instead, I would tell them, 'You want fun, right? You want three minutes of laughter, I will get it done, but in my style.' It is not mandatory to make someone feel uncomfortable or ridicule them to make people laugh," he said.He also spoke about refusing to exploit celebrities' personal lives for entertainment, particularly when it came to their relationships and breakups."People have breakups, link-ups, other things going on in their life. I would be very clear about these things, that I don't want to talk about these things. They would give us suggestions like she has just had a breakup with him, and he is going to be on stage, while she is sitting in front, so say these things… I would be like, 'Okay, will do.' But I would never do it because they would eventually forget it, because at the end of the day, whatever I did would be entertaining," he added.Explaining his approach to hosting, Maniesh said he wanted celebrities to feel comfortable rather than demeaned for the sake of a few laughs. "A lot of people would feel comfortable, because we are all the same. All of our family members watch all this. Hence, I make sure to not cross a line by demeaning someone," he said.Katrina Kaif recently faced online trolling over her appearance after she attended the Ambanis' Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. However, her latest appearance in London offered a different talking point. Addressing the social media criticism, she said at the event, "I think we

really need to be careful of letting the narrative on social media affect our self-worth and our value, because there are so many opinions out there that if we're going to start trying to cater to all of them, I think it really hampers your ability to make choices for yourself."

Mr Faisu gets married in Medina, shares wedding photos: 'Blessing beyond words'

Social media star Faisal Shaikh, popularly known as Mr Faisu, has begun a new chapter in his life. The influencer has announced his wedding by sharing pictures from his nikah ceremony in Medina, Saudi Arabia, giving fans a glimpse of the intimate celebration attended by his family.Taking to Instagram, Faisu shared photographs from the special occasion, expressing gratitude for being able to get married in the holy city with his loved ones by his side. Faisu wrote in the caption, "And We created you in pairs" (Quran 78:8) Alhamdulillah for a dream turned into reality. Nikah in the beautiful city of Madinah, with my entire family by my side. A blessing beyond words."

The influencer also asked his followers to keep the couple in their prayers as they begin their married life together."Please keep us in your duas as we begin this beautiful journey together. May Allah bless our marriage with endless love and barakah. Ameen."He did not share anything about his wife.The announcement comes after weeks of speculation about his wedding plans, with reports suggesting that the ceremony would take place in Madinah before a celebration with friends and family in Mumbai.Yuvika Choudhary offers a glimpse of Mr Faisu's wedding card

Recently, Yuvika Choudhary, wife of actor Prince Narula, shared a vlog featuring a glimpse of the influencer's wedding invitation. In the video, a decorated board bearing the names "MR. FAISU & TANYA" was visible, prompting fans to discuss the upcoming celebrations.Earlier this year, Faisu addressed the wedding rumours during an appearance on Cyrus Broacha's podcast. When Cyrus asked him whether he planned to get married in July, as reports had suggested, the influencer clarified that the timing was incorrect but confirmed that he would tie the knot in 2026."Not in July, but yes, I'm definitely getting married this year. Hundred percent. Whatever happens," he said.Cyrus then asked, "So the entire rumor wasn't wrong after all?"Responding to the question, Faisu explained that only the reported month was inaccurate."Not completely wrong. Sir, there are no rumours as such. It's just that there was a rumor that I would get married in July, but that's not true. However, yes, I am getting married this year. It can happen anytime."Faisal Shaikh first rose to prominence through short-form videos on TikTok before building a substantial following on Instagram. He gradually expanded his presence beyond social media to become a familiar face in television and entertainment.Faisu participated in Khatron Ke Khiladi 12, where he took on challenging stunts, and later appeared on Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 10, impressing audiences with his dancing skills and finishing as one of the finalists.He also continued to explore music videos and acting projects. Most recently, he participated in the reality show The 50, finishing as the first runner-up.

Armaan Malik hopes 'Sabar' inspires listeners to appreciate their journey

Mumbai: Playback singer Armaan Malik, who has lent his voice to the song 'Sabar', has spoken about the significance of patience and gratitude in a person's life.The song is part of 'Bhoomi 2026' and explores the idea that happiness does not always lie in reaching a destination, but also in learning to appreciate the journey along the way.The song is composed by Salim-Sulaiman, with lyrics by Shraddha Pandit. 'Sabar' is rooted in the values of patience, gratitude and appreciation. For Armaan, the song also holds a personal connection.

Saira Banu recalls Dilip Kumar's heartwarming gesture towards Nana Patekar

Mumbai: Veteran star Saira Banu remembered a beautiful moment between her late husband, legendary actor Dilip Kumar, and legendary Nana Patekar which highlighted an emotional camaraderie between the two.She recalled how Dilip Kumar personally dried the actor's head and offered him a fresh shirt after he arrived at their home completely drenched in heavy rain. Saira shared the anecdote while paying tribute to Nana following his demise, and remembering the warmth and humanity that defined Dilip Kumar beyond his legendary stature in Indian cinema.Sharing a video of Nana, Saira expressed grief over his passing, further describing him as an extraordinary artist and a performer of rare intensity. She also recalled an incident Nana had narrated about Dilip Kumar after receiving the National Film Award for Best Actor for his performance in Krantiveer in 1994.

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