

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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PM Modi to Visit Rajasthan, Gujarat; to Launch Rs 1.06 Lakh Crore Development Projects

"New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Rajasthan and Gujarat on Friday, during which he will inaugurate the new terminal building at Jodhpur Airport, launch the revamped UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme, and unveil development projects worth ₹1.06 lakh crore. "The Prime Minister will begin his visit by inaugurating the newly built terminal at Jodhpur Airport, aimed at enhancing passenger facilities and strengthening regional air connectivity in Rajasthan. "He will also launch the revised UDAN Scheme, the Centre's regional air connectivity programme, which seeks to improve access to air travel by expanding connectivity to underserved and unserved destinations. "At Balotra, Mr. Modi will lay the foundation stone and dedicate multiple development projects with a combined outlay of ₹1.06 lakh crore. The projects span sectors including infrastructure, transportation, energy, and public welfare, and are intended to support economic activity and improve public services. "Later, the Prime Minister will address a public meeting at Balotra, where he is expected to outline the



Centre's development agenda for the region. "The visit is expected to focus on infrastructure expansion, regional connectivity, and the implementation of major public investment projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Uttam Warns Farmers of El Niño Challenge, Urges Water-Smart Farming Amid Weak Monsoon

"Eye secrets "Hyderabad, July 3: Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday urged Telangana farmers to prepare for a potentially difficult Kharif season, cautioning that the impact of El Niño and a weakening southwest monsoon could pose serious challenges to agriculture. He appealed to farmers to adopt water-efficient cropping practices and plan cultivation based on evolving weather conditions. "Addressing farmers during a series of official programmes in Suryapet district, Uttam Kumar Reddy said agriculture in Telangana has witnessed a remarkable transformation under the Congress Government, describing it as a "festive activity" for farmers. He highlighted record paddy production, large-scale procurement operations and the continuation of bonus support for seven fine rice varieties, saying these initiatives have significantly strengthened the farming community. "However, the Minister cautioned that climatic conditions demand greater vigilance. He pointed out that the El Niño phenomenon has adversely affected rainfall across several parts of the country, leading to a weak southwest monsoon. "According to Uttam Kumar Reddy, India recorded nearly 40 per cent below-normal rainfall in June 2026, making it one of the driest Junes in recent years. Telangana, too, received around 22 per cent less rainfall during the month, resulting in delayed sowing in many regions. "The Minister explained that a substantial portion of the Godavari river basin lies in Maharashtra, and deficient rainfall there has delayed inflows into Telangana's reservoirs, adding to concerns over water availability. "Advising farmers to exercise caution, he urged them to avoid cultivating highly water-intensive crops in areas where irrigation supply remains uncertain. Instead, he recommended opting for drought-resilient and low water-consuming crops to minimise risks during the season. "He stressed that reservoir water must be utilised judiciously, with drinking water receiving the highest priority, followed by irrigation requirements. Ef-

fective water management and scientific crop planning,

he said, would be crucial if rainfall continues to remain below normal. "Uttam Kumar Reddy assured farmers that the State Government is closely monitoring rainfall patterns, reservoir storage levels and overall water availability to facilitate timely policy decisions. He reiterated the government's commitment to supporting farmers while ensuring efficient utilisation of available water resources. "Expressing confidence in Telangana's resilience, the Minister said that with careful planning, responsible water management and cooperation from farmers, the state can successfully overcome the challenges posed by El Niño and sustain agricultural growth. "During his visit to Suryapet district, Uttam Kumar Reddy also inspected the ongoing construction of the Integrated School at Gaddipalli, being built at a cost of ₹250 crore. He reviewed works at the Government Junior College (Rs 7.25 crore) and the Government Degree College (₹4.50 crore) in Huzurnagar, and inaugurated the BT Road connecting Chilukuru and Jerripothulagudem. "Kodad MLA N. Padmavati Reddy also participated in the official programmes.



Andhra Pradesh Set to Become India's Next Steel Powerhouse: CM Chandrababu Naidu



newable power to the plant, making it one of India's largest green steel projects. Together, the projects will create around 2,700 direct jobs. The ₹531-crore JSW Industrial Park in Vizianagaram will further boost industrial development. "Naidu said Rayalaseema has transformed into a hub for horticulture, minerals, automobiles, defence, electronics, drones and renewable energy, adding that the region is now progressing towards becoming water-secure and industrially prosperous. "Highlighting the government's commitment, he said infrastructure, water supply, road, rail and port connectivity would be ensured for the steel plant. He also reiterated that the State is creating a strong investment ecosystem through stable governance and industry-friendly policies. "The Chief Minister announced that the Gandikota R&R package would be released soon and reaffirmed the government's focus on irrigation, horticulture and tourism development. He said the Global Horticulture Hub at Madanapalle would be launched before August 15 and that Gandikota would be developed into a world-class tourist destination. "JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal described Chandrababu Naidu as a visionary leader and announced that the company would invest nearly ₹50,000 crore across Andhra Pradesh, creating employment opportunities for around 50,000 people. He also said the Rayalaseema Steel Plant would be expanded beyond its initial capacity in the future. "The event was attended by Union Minister Srinivasa Varma, State Ministers, public representatives and senior officials.

"Sunnapurallapalle, Kadapa. "Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu launched the construction of the JSW Rayalaseema Steel Plant and the JSW Neo Energy Renewable Power Project at Sunnapurallapalle, while virtually inaugurating the JSW Industrial Park in Vizianagaram district, marking a major milestone in Andhra Pradesh's industrial growth. "Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is emerging as India's next steel and manufacturing hub with major investments from JSW Steel, the proposed ArcelorMittal Steel Plant, and the revival of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. "The ₹16,350-crore Rayalaseema Steel Plant will produce 2 million tonnes of steel annually, while the ₹20,350-crore JSW Neo Energy Project will supply re-

MP Vamsi Krishna Secures Rs 2.5 Lakh CMRF Aid for NIMS Patient Writing

"Eye secrets "Hyderabad, July 3: Peddapalli Member of Parliament Gaddam Vamsi Krishna facilitated financial assistance of ₹2.50 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) for the treatment of Munimadugula Buchanna, a resident of Thimmapur village in Luxettipet Mandal. "Buchanna, who is undergoing treatment at NIMS Hospital, required financial support for a fracture screw fixation surgery. His family approached the MP seeking assistance. "Responding promptly, Vamsi Krishna recommended the case to the Telangana government for financial aid under the CMRF. Based on the recommendation, the government sanctioned a Letter of Credit (LOC) worth ₹2.50 lakh to cover the cost of the patient's treatment. "The beneficiary's family thanked the MP for his timely intervention, stating that the financial assistance provided significant relief at a crucial time.



Teach Youth the Truth About Emergency Atrocities: BJP State Chief Ramchander Rao

"Eye secrets "Hyderabad, July 3: "BJP Telangana State President N. Ramchander Rao on Friday stressed the need to educate the younger generation about the atrocities committed during the 1975-77 Emergency, describing it as the "darkest chapter in the history of Indian democracy. "Speaking at a function in Nalgonda, where he unveiled the book "Nalgonda Zilla Emergency Vyatireka Porata Yodhulu" authored by Chintia Mutyala Rao, Rao said the sacrifices of those who fought to protect democracy should never be forgotten. "Marking 50 years since the Emergency, he said future generations must understand how then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency after the Allahabad High Court verdict invalidated her election, alleging that it was done to suppress political opponents, democratic institutions, and dissenting voices. "Rao said the 19-month Emergency witnessed widespread violations of civil liberties, including arrests of opposition leaders, RSS and Jana Sangh workers, students and lawyers, press censorship, forced sterilisation drives, and large-scale demolitions. He added that these events should be included in educational curricula so that the true history of the nation is preserved. "Alleging that the Congress had undermined the Constitution during the Emergency, Rao said the BJP



has consistently stood for protecting democratic values. He also paid tribute to several Emergency-era activists from Nalgonda district for their sacrifices in defending democracy. "Demanding an apology from the Congress, Rao said the party should express regret to the nation, the families of those jailed, political workers who were tortured, and all citizens whose constitutional rights were violated during the Emergency.

Pachpadra Refinery Set for Nation Dedication Today; India's Energy Security Gets a Strategic Boost

Eye secrets New Delhi/Jodhpur, July 3: "India is set to mark a significant milestone in its energy sector as the Pachpadra Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex in Rajasthan is dedicated to the nation today. The mega integrated project, one of the country's largest greenfield refinery ventures, is expected to substantially strengthen India's energy security, expand domestic refining capacity, reduce dependence on imported petroleum products and emerge as a major driver of industrial and economic growth in western India. "Developed by HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Limited (HRRL), a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and the Government of Rajasthan, the refinery has been established at Pachpadra in Balotra district with an investment running into tens of thousands of crores of rupees. The project is regarded as one of the most technologically advanced refinery-cum-petrochemical complexes in the country. "The refinery has been designed to process nearly 9 million metric tonnes of crude oil annually, producing high-quality petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), LPG and other petroleum products that comply with the latest environmental standards. Alongside fuel production, the integrated petrochemical complex will manufacture polypropylene and other value-added petrochemical products, reducing India's dependence on imports while creating new opportunities for domestic manufacturing. "Energy experts believe the commissioning of the project comes at a crucial time when India is witnessing a steady rise in energy demand due to rapid urbanisation, industrial expansion and increasing vehicle ownership. Enhancing domestic refining capacity is expected to improve fuel availability, strengthen supply chains and provide greater resilience against global crude oil market disruptions. "The project is also expected to transform Rajasthan's industrial landscape. Thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities have already been generated during construction, while the operational phase is expected to create long-term jobs in refinery operations, logistics, petrochemicals, engineering and ancillary industries. The development of roads, rail connectivity, pipelines, storage facilities and supporting infrastructure around the refinery is likely to accelerate economic activity across the region. "Officials say the integrated petrochemical complex will encourage the establishment of downstream plastic, packaging, textile



and chemical manufacturing industries, creating a robust industrial ecosystem in western Rajasthan. Local businesses, transport operators and service providers are also expected to benefit significantly from the project's multiplier effect. "The refinery has incorporated modern technologies aimed at improving energy efficiency, reducing emissions and ensuring compliance with stringent environmental norms. Digital monitoring systems, advanced process control and pollution mitigation measures have been integrated into the facility to support sustainable operations. "The dedication of the Pachpadra Refinery is being viewed as a major step towards India's broader goal of achieving energy self-reliance under the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. With India's petroleum consumption continuing to grow, the project is expected to play a vital role in ensuring long-term energy security while strengthening the country's position as one of Asia's leading refining and petrochemical hubs. "Industry observers note that beyond meeting domestic fuel requirements, the refinery's strategic location and integrated petrochemical capabilities will also enhance India's export potential, improve the balance of trade and contribute significantly to the national economy. As the facility begins commercial operations, it is expected to emerge as a key pillar in India's expanding energy infrastructure and a catalyst for sustained industrial growth in the years ahead.

Pachpadra Refinery Dedicated to Nation, Strengthening India's Energy Future

Eye secrets: New Delhi/Jodhpur, July 3: India today marks a major milestone in its energy sector with the dedication of the Pachpadra Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex in Rajasthan. Developed by HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Limited (HRRL), the state-of-the-art integrated project is set to significantly enhance the country's energy security, boost domestic refining capacity and reduce reliance on imported petroleum products. "Built at Pachpadra in Balotra district, the refinery has an annual crude processing capacity of 9 million metric tonnes. It will produce high-quality petrol, diesel, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), LPG and petrochemical products, including polypropylene, supporting both fuel secu-

ity and domestic manufacturing. "The mega project is expected to transform western Rajasthan into a major industrial hub by generating thousands of direct and indirect jobs, attracting downstream industries and improving infrastructure, including roads, railways and pipeline networks. "Equipped with advanced technology for energy efficiency and environmental protection, the refinery aligns with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat vision. Industry experts believe the project will not only strengthen fuel supply and economic growth but also enhance India's position as a leading refining and petrochemical hub in Asia while boosting export potential.

A retired NSG commando killed, a son's revenge: How 7-year feud destroyed two Gurgaon families

At first glance, nothing about Kasan village suggests it has been living through a bloody feud between two families that once shared a close bond. Yet, the signs are hidden just under the calm. It is quiet on a summer afternoon, as residents walk past houses painted in shades of blue and green. Near the local market stands the Moni Baba ka Chabutra, a raised concrete platform where villagers would regularly gather to chat. It is now largely deserted and only a man, standing alone, is smoking beedi. The shops in the market only begin opening by midday. It was on this chabutra that a bloody feud, which many believed had already been settled by the courts, erupted once again on the morning of April 30.

Sundar Pal Singh, a 55-year-old former National Security Guard (NSG) commando known in the village as Sundar Fauji, was shot dead in broad daylight. He was out on parole from a life sentence for murder. The man accused of pulling the trigger was 20-year-old Kartik Chauhan, the younger son of the man Fauji had been convicted of killing in 2018 — former village sarpanch Bahadur Singh Chauhan. The home is dotted with remnants of Fauji's former life: NSG insignia and trophies gathered over years of service. His Royal Enfield motorcycle is parked nearby. The home is dotted with remnants of Fauji's former life: NSG insignia and trophies gathered over years of service. His Royal Enfield motorcycle is parked nearby.

The physical distance between the homes of the two families is not more than 100 metres. The emotional distance has, however, widened significantly in these eight years. The Indian Express visited both households in the village in Haryana's Gurgaon district to understand how a friendship forged over the years unravelled into a cycle of bloodshed that has now claimed two lives and altered many more. Around the chabutra, hardly anyone is ready to give a clear picture of the shooting incident. They did not see it, many say, it happened early, before shops had opened for business. Police say the attack took place around 8.30 am. According to investigators, Fauji had been sitting at the platform, waiting for his wife. He had been released on parole on March 29 to attend a family wedding and was expected to return to prison soon. Police allege that Kartik and his friend Gulshan, alias Gullu, approached him and fired five rounds from close range. A video of the murder surfaced later. As the former commando collapsed, villagers rushed towards the scene. According to police, the two accused allegedly pointed their weapons at pursuing residents before abandoning two pistols and fleeing. Fauji was taken to a nearby private hospital, where he was declared dead.

In May, Gurgaon police arrested Kartik and Gulshan, describing the killing as a "planned act of revenge". Police claim that during questioning, Kartik admitted that he had orchestrated the attack to avenge his father's death. Investigators further allege that he had travelled to Uttar Pradesh to procure illegal firearms used in the shooting. But the story, according to both the families, began years earlier.

"Never used violence" A narrow lane leads to the Singh household, where Fauji's family is struggling to come to terms with his murder. Several houses owned by the family stand side by side. Some have been rented out to villagers. His home is a medium-sized two-storey building, with black and silver metal gates at the entrance. The walls were recently painted pink for a wedding in the family. Inside, the living room is plastered with floral wallpaper. The home is dotted with remnants of Fauji's former life: NSG insignia and trophies gathered over years of service. His Royal Enfield motorcycle is parked nearby. Fauji's wife, 53-year-old Manju Rani, speaks softly, often pausing midway through sentences. Currently, she lives with her mother in the house. Rani says Fauji joined the Army's Rajput Regiment in the early 1990s and later served as an NSG commando before retirement. She remembers her husband as a problem solver in the village. "He never used violence. Even on that day in 2018, we do not know exactly how the gun went off," she says. Bahadur Singh's home in Gurgaon. He was killed by Fauji in 2018. His wife, children and daughters-in-law live in the house now. Hazaarika) Bahadur Singh's home in Gurgaon. He was killed by Fauji in 2018. His wife, children and daughters-in-law live in the house now. Hazaarika) Her mother, 72-year-old Angoori Devi, remembers her son-in-law as a caring family man. "He looked after me better than a son," she says. "He paid for my medicines and my eye operation." A Gurgaon court convicted Fauji for the murder of Bahadur and sentenced him to life imprisonment. What happened that day remains central to the competing narratives both families tell. Her husband, she says, had lent substantial sums to Bahadur over the years because of their friendship.

"He had given him nearly Rs 65 lakh as far as we

Hunger, beatings and a pitbull: 12 men recount bonded labour horror in UP

For three months, 68-year-old Meharbaan Shah lived in uncertainty. He didn't know if his son, Dilshad Mohammad, his youngest, was alive. The 24-year-old had left home in Uttar Pradesh's Amroha district five months ago, hoping to find work and support his family. For the first few weeks, Dilshad regularly called his wife, Gulista Begum. Then, one day, the calls stopped. "We looked for him everywhere...", said Meharbaan. "After exhausting every possibility, I left it to God. Gulista, too, lost hope... she believed something terrible must have happened to Dilshad... she returned to her parents' home with their young son." Dilshad and 11 other men had been rescued on Monday by the Muzaffarnagar Police from a factory manufacturing disposable leaf plates in Titawi area, where they were allegedly held as bonded labourers. Police said the workers were confined for months, forced to work for up to 20 hours a day, subjected to repeated physical abuse.

'One meal, beaten with sticks, no phones': 12 men rescued from UP factory recall horror The weapons used to torture the men, seized by police. (Muzaffarnagar Police/@muzaffarnagarpol) "When I heard my son's voice, I was so overwhelmed that I couldn't speak for a few moments," recalled Meharbaan. "The first thing I asked was where he was. He said Muzaffarnagar. I immediately asked him to come home." For Dilshad, the three months at the factory were like living in hell.

"We were never allowed to leave the premises," he told over the phone. "If anyone asked to go home, questioned the conditions, or even slept for more than three or four hours, they were beaten and tortured. They also took away my mobile phone, so I had no way of telling my family or anyone outside what we were enduring." On

know, including money borrowed from my brothers and relatives," she says. "Most of it was in cash. He had gone to ask for the money back." The relationship began to sour, Fauji's family says, when he asked for the money back multiple times because the family needed to pay for children's education. The Chauhan family, however, disputes these claims, saying no money was borrowed from Fauji. The 2018 murder took place when Fauji purportedly went to ask for his money from Bahadur — on April 11 of that year. According to police and family members, Fauji went to Bahadur's dairy farm in the village at night, and was initially thrown out from there. Then, he allegedly went in and shot Bahadur. Police sources say eight shots were fired from a licensed revolver that Fauji had allegedly taken out of his bank locker a week earlier. Rani alleges that after the 2018 murder, members of the Chauhan family forcibly took control of a school she operated in the village and intimidated staff members. She says that the cases related to this intimidation remain pending before the courts. The Chauhans deny wrongdoing and maintain that the school property legally belongs to them. Rani's sister-in-law, Madhuri, also lives in the village. She insists Fauji had actively supported Bahadur's political career and even helped finance his election campaigns.

"He stood by him," she claims. "What happened in 2018 was wrong, yes. But now our children are facing questions about revenge and more revenge." The family says that they had celebrated the marriage ceremony of Fauji's elder daughter only 10 days before he was killed. "We want the bloodshed to stop now," Madhuri says. "The legal cases can continue. But enough people have suffered." Rani says she is now focused on rebuilding the family's life. "I am waiting for my pension paperwork," she says. "Our son is pursuing an MBA. We have to pay his fees." A short walk away from the Singhs' home is the Chauhan household. The two-storey house with green-tinted windows is painted olive green with floral motifs. Though eight years have passed, several among the Chauhan family are still angry. Satpal, Bahadur's elder brother, remains unapologetic. "What my nephew did was right," he says bluntly, regarding the murder of Fauji. However, Bahadur's other children take a more measured tone. Rohan Chauhan, 26, and his sister Sapna, 30, say they do not support their younger brother's actions, though they believe years of unresolved trauma and provocation contributed to them. According to the siblings, their father and Fauji had once shared a close friendship. "He used to eat at our house," they say. They knew each other from the time they served in the Army together in Kashmir in the 1990s. The families, however, did not interact much. "My father attended their family functions and Fauji did the same. We knew their kids, but we were not friends," Sapna says.

The family rejects claims that Chauhan had borrowed money from Fauji. "There was no question of debt," Sapna says. "We had gotten close to Rs 3 crore when Maruti acquired our land." Sapna insists that her family owns the disputed school property. "The property belongs to us. It was only leased to the Singh family to run the school. After the 2018 incident, we took it back," she claims. The family says Kartik appeared increasingly withdrawn in the days leading up to last month's shooting. "We thought he was being shy after marriage," says Rohan. "He had only been married for three months." The siblings allege that Fauji occasionally approached Kartik and made remarks that disturbed him, though they say they never imagined matters would escalate into violence. "If we had known what was going on in his mind, we would never have left him alone," says Rohan. The family insists they had accepted the court's verdict in the 2018 murder case. "We got closure when the life sentence came," says Sapna. "But now Kartik has ruined his own life." The siblings describe a future that now appears permanently altered. Kartik was in his first year of a BA degree via distance learning. "He had ambitions to expand the family's water purification business into dairy and poultry ventures," Rohan says. Now, each family member gets only a few moments on the phone with Kartik every day. "He talks about food and routine things," says Sapna. "Not about what happened." Villagers say they were not surprised by the killing because they believed the conflict had never truly ended. A resident of Kasan village, who knew both the families, says she had even thought of moving out after the 2018 incident, fearing a cycle of violence would follow. "My son, who lives in the city, had asked if we wanted to move in with him [after the latest murder]. We were scared that there might be more violence. Even though we didn't move then, we are not ruling it out. Who can say what will happen," she says. The families involved are aware of the sentiment. Sapna says some had been anticipating something like April's incident. "People thought it was inevitable," she says quietly.

Monday, a joint team of the police, district administration and labour department raided the manufacturing unit in Mandi village after receiving information from a man who had reportedly escaped from the factory. The men, aged between 16 and 44, from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Rajasthan, were rescued. Police have arrested two people: Pradeep Balyan (49), father of factory owner Ankit Balyan; and Ankit's associate, Shiva Tyagi (26). Ankit is on the run; police said multiple teams are conducting raids to arrest him. The accused have been booked under sections of the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015; and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. 'One meal, beaten with sticks, no phones': 12 men rescued from UP factory recall horror Outside the manufacturing unit in Mandi village, Muzaffarnagar. (PTI) Police said the workers alleged they had been lured from railway stations and other public places by Ankit and others with promises of steady jobs, decent wages, free accommodation and meals, only to find themselves trapped inside the factory. Inside, the accused allegedly kept the men under their control through violence, intimidation and verbal abuse, subjecting them to inhumane living and working conditions while preventing them from leaving the premises. Superintendent of Police, Muzaffarnagar, Sanjai Kumar said a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by Superintendent of Police Mahadik Akshay Sanjay, has been constituted to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the allegations. Phones taken away, pitbull to terrorise us The workers recounted the abuse they faced — little food, daily beatings

How an Aligarh surgery that removed the wrong kidney led to a 12-year legal battle

Ever since he took his mother to the Ashirwad Nursing Home in Aligarh 14 years ago, Veer Singh has measured his life in court cases. A "negligent" surgeon removed her healthy kidney, instead of the diseased one, triggering a medical board inquiry, proceedings before the Uttar Pradesh Medical Council, and a 12-year legal battle before the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. In between, Veer's mother died and he grew older — but the court cases carried on. He spent years struggling to clear the medical debt while grieving the loss of his mother. That is, until last month, when the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission directed the doctor responsible for the surgery to pay two crore rupees. "These 14 years have felt like an eternity — first running around hospitals and doctors and then courts. I would travel from Aligarh to New Delhi for the commission hearings, then learn that opposing counsel wasn't present and that the case was adjourned," says Singh.

In its May 18 order, the commission directed Dr Rajeev Lochan of Ashirwad Nursing Home to pay two crore rupees to Shanti Devi's family for "the negligent surgery" and for depriving them of her "company, love and affection." "The loss is irreparable, in as much as, the loss of a mother to her sons, a spouse to her husband and a housewife to a family, all combined together cannot be diluted, moreso with the nature of the negligence in the present case," the consumer commission's order says. For the family, this order came after years of trauma and suffering. "Even after the botched surgery, we were not counting money, we were solely focused on keeping her alive. It was my wish to get justice while she was alive, so that she gets some sense of closure," Veer Singh, who works as an LIC agent, says. The hospital no longer exists. Queries sent to Dr Lochan's lawyer went unanswered. It started with a dull, radiating pain in the abdomen. At first, 56-year-old Shanti Devi, who managed the family convenience store, ignored it, but the pain grew insistent. On April 17, 2012, Veer, the eldest of her three sons, took Shanti Devi to the clinic after work because it was close to home. "We didn't know him and had never consulted him before. But we knew the hospital was conveniently located," he recalls. It was meant to be a routine visit: they would meet the doctor, get her checked up, get some medicines and return home. Instead, it led to a series of tests and a worrying diagnosis: hydronephrosis, or enlargement of the right kidney because of blockages and urine build-up. Further tests confirmed that the surgery was necessary. "After the diagnosis, we even got second opinions from other places, including the hospital attached to Aligarh Muslim University, and a hospital in Agra. They all said that the surgery was necessary. So, in the end, we decided to go to Lochan."

At 11:30 am on May 6, Shanti Devi was wheeled into the operation theatre for kidney removal. The family had spent the previous day undergoing pre-operative tests and, though anxious, they were convinced that the procedure was necessary for her survival. But then it went downhill. Shanti Devi's health declined. She couldn't pass urine even 24 hours after the surgery, her body swelled and turned a pale blue. Yet there was no word from the doctor, even during his post-op rounds. A day later, Dr Lochan referred her for dialysis at another hospital and discharged her. There were no questions, no tests and no follow-ups, only a hospital bill of just under one lakh rupees. At the hospital she was sent to, she underwent dialysis. Blood tests also showed that her creatinine levels were normal. But Shanti Devi's family remained anxious. "We got scared. We thought, 'Why does she need dialysis when she has one healthy kidney?'" Despite the dialysis, Devi's health continued to slide. On June 3, 2012, Veer Singh consulted Dr Dinesh Khullar, a New Delhi-based nephrologist, who was visiting Aligarh. He ordered fresh tests. The results stunned them. Instead of the damaged kidney, the surgeon had removed the

A 'cheerful girl', a 'well-liked' boy and a 'sportsman': The 3 at heart of Pune's murder plot

As the investigation into the death of Pune-based Ketan Agarwal continues, police said Thursday that the two suspects — Ketan's fiancée Siya Goyal, and her friend Chetan Choudhary — were blaming each other for what had happened. Sources said Chetan has been saying during questioning that he wanted to elope with Siya, but she insisted they "get rid of" Ketan. Siya, on the other hand, is reportedly claiming that the murder was Chetan's idea, and that he broke down when a previous alleged plot failed. Coming from an affluent family, Siya, 20, is a Commerce student at a well-known Pune college. Her family, who lives in a large bungalow called Lila Kunj in Bibwewadi near Market Yard in Pune, is in the dry fruits business. Bibwewadi is known as a highly sought-after residential and commercial neighbourhood in southern Pune, located about an hour's drive from the Lodha Belmondo apartment block in Gahunje, where Ketan lived. Those who know Siya describe her as "cheerful", interested in fashion and, recently, active with her own baking business. However, little is known about this business. Shocked at the revelation that Siya may have had a hand in Ketan's death, from a fall at Lohagad Fort near Pune, Ketan's mother Rakhi Agarwal says: "Siya was well-behaved, like any regular girl. She was always smiling. She had come home several times — for a puja, for dinner, for a birthday. We went shopping and for meals." The families were distantly related. Searching for answers for the murder, months ahead of a luxurious wedding planned by them for Siya and Ketan later this year, Rakhi says they had put "only two" conditions to Siya before the wedding: that "we do not allow drinking in our house", and "I would not let her attend parties". Their engagement, on Valentine's Day this year, had been a grand affair, held in a Pune hotel. The wedding was planned at a palace in Udaipur, Rajasthan, with two aircraft chartered for the guests.

In photos and videos of the couple which have surfaced on social media since Ketan's killing, he and Siya can be seen dancing as a guitarist plays a song, and celebrating with a cake. In another, Ketan surprises Siya with a ride in a car whose sunroof is decked with flowers. A social media post put up by Siya after Ketan's death has also surfaced. "You left me on my birthday," she put up. "You left when we were so close to getting married. I still can't understand why you did this to me. I had dreams, questions I'll never get answers to. Why did you leave me when I loved you so much? Rest in peace." Siya has a brother, two years younger to her. He was with the couple when they travelled to Mumbai for their flight to Bali, Indonesia, for a pre-wedding shoot. Police have claimed Siya

healthy one. Another round of second opinions followed, and the family confronted Dr Lochan. "He didn't admit to the mistake. We even pleaded with him. He said that the only thing that can be done now is to go for a kidney transplant and offered us Rs 50,000 to keep quiet," Veer Singh recalls. "He (Dr Lochan) suggested a kidney transplant, saying someone from her family should donate to her. But her blood group is different from ours, and what's the guarantee the donor won't become sick? We registered at AIIMS New Delhi for a kidney transplant, but the queue was long and our number never came." In the days that followed, an FIR invoking provisions relating to causing grievous hurt by weapon — later modified to the less serious charge of grievous hurt by rash and negligent act — under the Indian Penal Code was registered. This led to a medical board inquiry into the incident. On July 18, 2012, the board unequivocally found Dr Lochan "fully responsible and guilty of removing the left kidney of the patient whereas the right dysfunctional kidney was in its place in her body". Subsequently, the Uttar Pradesh Medical Council suspended Dr Lochan's licence for two years in March 2013. The suspension was upheld by the Medical Council of India in 2014. In October 2012, police filed a chargesheet, which remains pending before an Aligarh court. In 2013, the Allahabad High Court dismissed a plea by Dr Lochan to quash the chargesheet.

After the botched surgery, life had overnight taken a tragic turn for Shanti Devi. She was confined to her bed. Her outings were limited to hospital visits once every three days for dialysis. Her weight fell dramatically from 58 kg to 30 kg. Her condition was fast deteriorating and soon her family realised that the end was near. "Before, she was very active and was very close to my children. She would drop them off at school and pick them up, and manage the convenience store," Veer Singh remembers. "But after the surgery, my mother broke. She had accepted that she would die. She wanted the pain to end. Woh kehthe the mujhe ichchhamrityu chahiye (She would say she wants to be euthanised)." For the family, too, life changed dramatically: medical trips and doctor's appointments began to dictate their lives, medical bills climbed, and savings dwindled. "We had to mortgage the house to meet the expenses. I wasn't working at that time, and dedicated my time to caring for her. When she was alive, we would travel to New Delhi for her dialysis and health check-ups. After her death, it was for the court cases," Veer Singh says. On February 20, 2014, Devi died of "shock and septicaemia". In August that year, Veer Singh moved the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission accusing Dr Lochan of medical negligence. The complaint stated the family had "reasonable and strong apprehension that the healthy kidney removed from the body of Late Shanti Devi has been illegally sold by (Dr Lochan) with an intention of enriching himself". The commission admitted the complaint in March 2015 — over a year after Devi's demise — and written statements were filed by 2017. But repeated adjournments and pandemic disruptions delayed hearings, with the complaint finally heard in May this year. In his arguments, Dr Lochan called it an accident, even theorising that "probably both the kidneys of the patient were on the same side and hence could be a congenital defect". He said that, after opening Shanti Devi's abdomen, "he could see the kidney and thus removed it". In their order, a Bench of Justice A P Sahi (president) and Bharat Kumar Pandya (member) rejected these arguments. "The removal of the left kidney was a medical disaster and negligence of the highest order. Had the left kidney remained intact, the patient would have survived longer," the commission said, noting that records showed Lochan could neither confirm which kidney he had removed nor firmly state its size. For the family, the order brings closure to a long court battle, but a Shanti Devi-sized void remains in their lives. What Veer Singh remembers most about his mother is her laughter: loud and uninhibited, the kind that fills up the room.

Elderly couple found murdered at Maharashtra home, killer threw ash on bodies

A 73-year-old man and his 68-year-old wife were found murdered at their home in Maharashtra's Raigad district on Tuesday. According to the police, ash was thrown on the elderly couple's bodies and inside the home. Police are questioning several people and hope to crack the case soon. Police suspect that the ash was aimed at hiding fingerprints and that the double murders were meticulously planned. Raghunath Dattu Farat, 73, and Surekha Raghunath Farat, 68, lived in Nigdoli village. Their two sons live with their wives and children elsewhere.

On Tuesday, their grandson Aditya Rohidas Farat, 21, his mother, and his sister came to meet the elderly

couple from Khalapur. Aditya kept knocking on the main door, but got no response. He then went to the back door and found it partially open. He went inside and found his grandfather, Raghunath, in a pool of blood. In another room, his grandmother, Surekha, was lying dead on the bed. There was blood and ash all around. Vishal Nehul, Deputy Superintendent of Police, said there were deep injury marks on the bodies, and it appeared that the killer slit their throats. An FIR has been registered following a complaint by Aditya. Police are scanning footage from a CCTV camera in the area. Manish Kumar Pathak is a dedicated journalist reporting for The Indian Express from Mumbai. His work demonstrates substantial Expertise and Authority across the complex field of crime reporting,

Kolkata Metro completes Aluminium third rail upgrade on underground Blue Line for faster train operations

Kolkata Metro has finished upgrading the underground Blue Line with a new aluminium third rail system to enable faster train movement. (Image: Kolkata Metro) Kolkata Metro has finished upgrading the underground Blue Line with a new aluminium third rail system to enable faster train movement. Kolkata Metro aluminium third rail upgrade: The Kolkata Metro railway has completed the Aluminium third rail upgrade across the entire underground section of its Blue Line. With this upgrade, the 40-year-old conventional Steel third rail system has been replaced with an advanced high-conductivity Aluminium third rail system. In 2012, the Ministry of Railways decided that all new Corridors of Kolkata Metro will be built with Aluminium third rail. Manufactured by Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), the Steel third rail system had been supplying power to metro rakes for more than four decades. However, with advancements in technology, the once-modern system of the 1980s had gradually become outdated and energy inefficient in today's era of green energy initiatives. How Kolkata Metro Blue Line services will improve

According to Kolkata Metro Railway, this major technological upgrade is a significant step towards modernising the traction infrastructure and achieving the faster train operations, i.e. targeted 150-second train headway in future operations. In a statement, the Metro

Railway said: "Aluminium's electrical conductivity is 38 million siemens per meter whereas Steel has value of 6 million siemens per meter. This physical characteristic of Aluminium is a simple reason for lesser voltage drops and lesser energy losses compared to Steel third rail. Apart from lesser loss, nearly no voltage drop in the third rail will help to achieve faster acceleration of train and reducing headway of running Metros." The underground section of Kolkata Metro Blue Line stretches from Noapara to Dum Dum and again from Belgachia to Mahanayak Uttar Kumar station. Kolkata Metro further said that the aluminium third rail system is expected to reduce carbon emissions by nearly 50,000 tonnes over its lifetime. The metro authority also stated that the new system will reduce the heat load on air-conditioning systems inside tunnels, as aluminium generates less heat due to its lower resistance compared to steel. "The initiative is expected to generate substantial environmental benefits, including an estimated reduction of nearly 50,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over its lifecycle.

The upgradation forms part of Metro Railway Kolkata's broader modernization roadmap, which includes implementation of advanced signalling systems to support higher-frequency operations, improved reliability and enhanced passenger carrying capacity on India's first metro corridor" the Kolkata Metro said.

Pune girl rape-murder: Charges framed against 65-year-old accused, he pleads not guilty

A special court on Thursday framed charges against a 65-year-old man who allegedly raped and murdered a three-year-old girl in a village in Maharashtra's Pune district, observing that the evidence on record contained sufficient grounds to do so. The accused denied the charges. The Pune court directed that day-to-day hearings in the matter be conducted from Friday. Considering the seriousness and sensitive nature of the case, the court also ordered that the trial be conducted in camera, the police said.

The girl, who was at her grandmother's house at the time of the incident, was raped and murdered on May 1. She was playing near a local temple when the accused, who has a criminal record, allegedly lured her and took her to a cowshed. He allegedly dumped her body in cow dung. The incident had sparked outrage, leading to an angry mob blocking the Pune-Satara highway. The accused, currently in Yerwada jail under judicial custody, was produced before the special court around 11 am on Thursday under police security. On May 16, the police had filed a chargesheet of around 1,100 pages against the accused. CCTV footage, statements cited Special Public Prosecutor Ajay Misar submitted in court that CCTV footage collected during the investigation clearly shows the accused taking the minor girl away. "Statements of some children and villagers recorded before the police as well as before the court establish that the accused and the victim were last seen together before her death," Misar told the court.

He also referred to the identification parade con-

ducted by witnesses, the medical reports of the accused and the victim, medical evidence regarding the accused's capability to commit such an act, reports confirming the accused's sound mental condition, DNA analysis, forensic science laboratory analysis, the inquest panchnama of the deceased, the postmortem report, and material evidence recovered on the basis of the accused's statement. Misar submitted a list of 82 witnesses before the court. He submitted that the prosecution had sufficiently strong oral and documentary evidence to prove all the charges levelled against the accused. He further argued that all circumstantial evidence collected during the investigation forms a strong and complete chain, and therefore requested the court to frame charges against the accused. On behalf of the accused, legal aid defence counsel and senior advocate Himantrao Suryawanshi, chief legal aid defence counsel K A Jiwani, and deputy chief legal aid defence counsel G R Gajbhiye appeared before the court.

Suryawanshi argued that the chargesheet does not contain adequate evidence to establish serious offences such as kidnapping, molestation and murder. He further contended that the "last seen together" theory and the forensic evidence are neither proper nor reliable, and therefore charges cannot be framed against the accused. Meanwhile, the police said the accused was a habitual offender who was earlier booked in two molestation cases. The police said he allegedly sexually assaulted an elderly woman in 1998 and allegedly molested his 17-year-old niece in 2015, but was acquitted in both cases on technicalities.

Indian-origin couple charged in Canada after baby's remains found in Halifax woods

A disturbing case involving the death of a newborn has shaken the Canadian city of Halifax, with an Indian-origin couple facing multiple charges after the remains of a baby were found in a wooded area over the weekend. The incident came to light last Friday evening when emergency services responded to a 911 call regarding a 23-year-old woman found in life-threatening condition at an apartment building on Willett Street in Halifax's Clayton Park neighbourhood in Nova Scotia. Medical staff later determined that the woman had recently given birth, but no infant was found with her, prompting an urgent search operation involving Halifax Regional Police, firefighters, paramedics and Halifax Search and Rescue teams. The police said interviews conducted over the weekend with four individuals known to the woman led investigators nearly 10 km away to a wooded area off Old Coach Road near Prospect Road in Goodwood. On Sunday afternoon, the remains of a newborn were discovered there. Halifax Regional Police said an autopsy by the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service is underway to determine the cause and manner of death. Investigators have so far been unable to speak to the mother, who remains in hospital in critical condition.

The police said her life-threatening condition appears linked to a medical emergency and not violence. Sukhpreet Singh, 23, described by the police as a relative of the mother, and his wife Ramandeep Kaur, 26, have been charged with concealing the body of a child with intent to hide its delivery, offering an indignity to human remains, obstruction of justice and resisting a peace officer. The couple made brief virtual appearances before Halifax Provincial Court on Monday. Crown attorney Paul Carver sought an adjournment, saying there was potential for "additional very serious charges" as investigators review further evidence. Both accused were remanded in custody and are scheduled to appear for a bail hearing on Thursday. Kaur has expressed a preference to appear in person before the court. Two other people detained earlier for questioning were later released without charges. The case has triggered shock and grief in the diverse Clayton Park community. Local residents and business owners expressed concern for the woman and sorrow over the infant's death. Paul Service, chief director of Halifax Search and Rescue, described the operation as emotionally difficult and said counselling and debriefing support was being provided to volunteers involved in the search.

Fixing India's labour wage crisis

Two recent experiences forced me to confront a question India can no longer avoid: Are wages in our economy structurally broken? Malleshram, National President of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, highlighted the distress among contract workers, even in public sector undertakings. Globally, US Senator Bernie Sanders revealed that 60% of American workers live paycheck to paycheck. If that is the reality in a developed economy, India's situation is even more fragile. Here, a large part of our workforce is not just living paycheck to paycheck; they are living on borrowed money to survive each month. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2023), over 45% of

regular wage/salaried workers earn less than Rs 10,000 per month, far below what can be considered a dignified living wage. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2024) further notes that India's real wage growth has been among the lowest in Asia over the past decade. This is not merely a labour issue. It is a systemic economic risk, a national risk that can derail the future of our youth. Over the past two decades, managerial compensation has surged and frontline wages have stagnated in real terms. An article published in Economic and Political Weekly reveals the reality of the organised manufacturing sector compensation:

How a mobile phone snatcher in Delhi was held, tried and convicted in just 12 days

How a mobile phone snatcher in Delhi was held, tried and convicted in just 12 days According to Delhi Police officers, efforts are being made to ensure street crime cases are investigated and taken to their logical end in a time-bound manner. On the afternoon of May 14, a taxi driver from Aligarh was resting inside his vehicle near Gandhi Market Gol Chakkar on Meer Dard Road in Delhi. He had dropped off passengers and was waiting for his next booking, said police. Within moments, his Redmi Note 13 Pro mobile phone was snatched. The alleged thief, later identified as Mohammad Adil (22), tried to escape through the crowd near Gandhi Market but was caught. Adil has now been convicted, with the investigation and trial completed within 12 days of the incident, officers said on Wednesday. According to Delhi Police officers, efforts are being made to ensure street crime cases are investigated and taken to their logical end in a time-bound manner.

In this mobile snatching case, the taxi driver wasted no time in chasing Adil after his phone was snatched, said officers, adding that Constable Rahul of IP Estate police station was on routine patrol duty nearby and spotted the commotion. He intervened and after a brief pursuit, the accused was apprehended on the spot and the stolen phone was recovered from his possession. What followed was not just a routine investigation, but what police officers describe as an example of the "time-bound justice", envisioned under the criminal law framework enacted in 2024. The FIR was registered under sections 304(2) and 317(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) the same day. The investigation was handled by Head Constable Nadeem under the supervision of SHO Inspector Nareesh Kumar, said officers.

Central District DCP Rohit Rajbir Singh said, "Unlike conventional investigations that often rely heavily on written paperwork, the police relied on technology-backed evidence collection. Recovery and seizure proceedings were digitally recorded through the E-Sakshya App in compliance with Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), creating contemporaneous electronic evidence intended to strengthen the

Lok Sabha MP, Union Minister, Punjabi face: Meet Harsh Malhotra, Delhi BJP chief

Harsh Malhotra, Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways and Corporate Affairs, who has been appointed the new chief of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) Delhi state unit, succeeded Gautam Gambhir as the party MP from the East Delhi seat in 2024. Malhotra will take over charge of the party unit from the outgoing Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva around 3 pm on Thursday (May 28), party officials said.

The appointment of Malhotra, who was originally one of the faces of the BJP in Punjab, is intended to send out a positive signal to Punjabi voters in the capital, these officials said. Malhotra has been a long-time worker of the BJP, and was active in municipal politics before the party fielded him from its East Delhi stronghold in the last Lok Sabha election. Malhotra won 52.33 per cent of the total vote, defeating Kuldeep Kumar, the AAP leader who is currently the MLA from Kondli. He polled 6.64 lakh votes against Kumar's 5.71 lakh votes, a victory margin of 93,663 votes.

While Malhotra's margin of victory was the smallest in terms of vote share among the seven BJP MPs who were elected to Lok Sabha from Delhi, he became the

Scrap VAT on fuel in Maharashtra to cut prices to Rs 70-80, NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil urges Fadnavis

Former Maharashtra Finance Minister and senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Jayant Patil Wednesday wrote to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, demanding that the state government scrap the value-added tax (VAT) and surcharge on petrol and diesel, keeping the interests of citizens in mind. Patil said that the state government levies VAT and a surcharge on fuel, which is applicable across Maharashtra, including Mumbai, Thane, and Navi Mumbai. "In the state, approximately 25 per cent VAT plus a surcharge of Rs 10.12 per litre is levied on petrol, while approximately 24 per cent VAT plus a surcharge of Rs 3.00 per litre is levied on diesel. The state government should abolish this VAT and surcharge on petrol and diesel. By doing so, petrol and diesel, currently priced at Rs 111, could be available directly for Rs 70-80," he said.

He said that the continuous price hikes have broken the common man's back and that urgent relief is required. In his letter, Patil stated that the West Asia conflict is putting immense pressure on India's economy, including Maharashtra's. Inflation has surged, with sharp increases in the prices of edible oils, vegetables, and other essential commodities. "This is directly impacting the common man, and the rising prices of petrol and diesel are further compounding the burden," he said. "Currently, petrol is being sold at Rs 111.12 per litre and diesel at Rs 96.86

prosecution during trial." Investigators also found that the accused had previously been involved in another criminal case registered at IP Estate earlier this year. The chargesheet was filed within four days of the incident. The trial proceeded on priority basis, reflecting a growing institutional push to ensure swift disposal in crimes affecting ordinary citizens, particularly offences such as snatching, robbery and street theft that directly impact public confidence and day-to-day safety, said officers. During the trial, the prosecution was led by Assistant Public Prosecutor Raghav Khurana, who presented witness testimony along with documentary and electronic evidence collected during the investigation. The court, after examining the material on record, convicted the accused on Tuesday. Speaking about the case, Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma said, "One of the key features of the new laws is that conviction should take place in a time-bound manner. Street crimes such as snatching are among the most visible crimes and they directly affect public life. In today's world, everything is inside a mobile phone: people's contacts, banking, identity documents, work and personal data." Verma added that Delhi Police intends to send a strong message that street crimes will be investigated and prosecuted swiftly under the new framework. "The idea is that all such street crimes should be dealt with in a time-bound manner. This works for the betterment of everyone involved: the victim, the accused, the judiciary and the police. Timely investigation and timely prosecution improve the entire criminal justice process," the DCP added. Officials in the Central District describe the conviction as more than just a successful prosecution in a snatching case. They see it as a practical demonstration of how policing, digital evidence collection, prosecution strategy and judicial timelines are expected to function under the current legal regime. In a similar case earlier reported from Delhi's Outer North district, police secured conviction in a street crime matter within just 14 days after filing the chargesheet in four days under an accelerated investigation mechanism. The trial was conducted on a day-to-day basis.

only MP from Delhi to become a part of the Union Council of Ministers in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term. Malhotra was the general secretary of the Delhi BJP when he was picked to contest the seat represented by Gambhir, the former India cricketer and head coach of the national side, in 2024. In 2025, he was given some responsibilities in West Bengal ahead of Assembly polls in that state. Malhotra, who studied botany and later law at Delhi University, is known as a loyal "organisation man". "He has been with the BJP from the beginning of his political career, and has loyally and silently worked for the party for decades," a party official said. Party leaders said the appointment of Malhotra would send a positive signal to Punjabis in the capital. "The BJP did not appoint a Punjabi face in a leadership role in Delhi following the Assembly elections (in 2025). A Mona Punjabi face was missing, even though the party has huge support among Punjabi voters," a senior party leader said. In Delhi, Malhotra has served as a former district president of the party in Navin Shahdara, and was elected as a councillor from East Delhi in 2017. He later rose to become Mayor of the erstwhile East Delhi Municipal Corporation.

per litre in Mumbai. Consequently, this inflation has crippled the common public," said Patil. Adding to the Opposition's voice, Congress Legislative Party leader Vijay Wadettiwar alleged that while the people of the country are suffering from inflation, unemployment, fuel price hikes, and economic instability, the BJP government is attempting to hide its failures behind religious polarisation, events, and emotional issues.

Launching an attack on the government over fuel shortages and rising prices, Wadettiwar stated, "Diesel is being dispensed only after checking the vehicle's RC book. Farmers use diesel for agricultural work, don't they? The situation in the country could become similar to a lockdown in the coming days. In the near future, petrol is likely to reach Rs 170 and diesel Rs 150 per litre. The middle class, farmers, and common citizens will be completely crushed. Flights are already being reduced, and fuel shortages are increasing. The government has started pushing the country into an economic abyss," said Wadettiwar. "The BJP's entire politics is aimed at distracting the public from these fundamental issues. Instead of talking about serious issues like petrol-diesel price hikes and farmers' problems, those in power are spreading discord in society by creating Hindu-Muslim conflicts," said Wadettiwar.

Expired gear, missing records: 2 Mumbai, Thane blood centres shut over safety lapses

The Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Friday ordered the immediate suspension of operations at Sir J J Metropolitan Blood Centre in Mumbai and Maya Blood Centre in Thane's Badlapur, following serious violations of blood bank regulations that could compromise the safety and quality of blood supplied to patients. The action follows a joint inspection conducted with the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) between June 22 and 24, after the FDA received information about alleged violations in blood collection, processing and distribution at the two facilities.

"The Food and Drug Administration will not tolerate any negligence or violation of rules affecting the health of blood donors and patients. All blood banks in the state must strictly comply with the law, failing which stringent regulatory action will follow. We are committed to ensuring that citizens receive safe blood," FDA Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe said. According to the FDA, inspectors found multiple violations of Schedule F, Part XII-B of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, which prescribes mandatory standards for licensing and operating blood

banks, including requirements for staffing, donor screening, testing, storage, quality control and record-keeping in India. Blood is a life-saving substance, and the highest standards of quality, safety and transparency must be maintained in its collection, processing and distribution, Mundhe said. At the Sir J J Metropolitan Blood Centre, inspectors found deficiencies in the storage and control systems for blood and blood components, improper handling of reactive and expired blood bags, shortcomings in the disposal of biohazardous material, failure of the quality management system, malfunctioning equipment, and the absence of essential sterilisation controls in the blood component preparation section. "The inspection at Maya Blood Centre in Badlapur revealed the absence of mandatory records relating to the transportation of blood collected during blood donation camps, deficiencies in the traceability of blood bags, the absence of a blood transfusion officer and other required technical staff, expired equipment calibration, lack of quality control testing, irregularities in biomedical waste management, and the absence of mandatory approvals and records for blood donation camps," FDA officers said.

EYE SECRETS
Editorial

India's Free Trade Agreement push

India's trade policy has seen a significant shift over the last five years. The government has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the UAE, Australia, the United Kingdom, the four EFTA nations, Oman, New Zealand, and the European Union. The EU agreement is a major milestone signed after about two decades of negotiations. The nine recently signed FTAs will be fully operational within the next ten months, while three to four agreements are under negotiation. India has 15 FTAs in operation covering 27 countries, accounting for more than 75% of its total trade. Since economic liberalisation, the country has never witnessed such extensive trade integration, and now enjoys preferential market access for its goods in major economies. The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force in May 2022 and eliminated duties on Indian goods such as textiles, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, and pharmaceuticals. Indian merchandise exports to the UAE grew by more than 20%, from \$28.4 billion in 2021-22 to \$37.36 billion in 2024-25 (Trade Intelligence and Analytics Portal, Ministry of Commerce).

Similarly, the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), which came into force in December 2022, granted duty-free access across 100% of tariff lines for Indian exporters. India's exports to Australia increased by more than 80%, from \$4 billion in 2021-22 to \$7.3 billion in 2025-26 (Trade Intelligence and Analytics Portal, Ministry of Commerce). Sectors such as textiles, leather, machinery, and processed food—where India has a comparative export advantage — are expected to benefit from the agreement. The FTA with EU, once ratified, will be the largest trade agreement India has ever entered. The EU is India's second-largest trading partner. Preferential access to 27 European markets for Indian pharmaceuticals, IT services, textiles, chemicals, and agri-processed goods will strengthen India's export competitiveness over the long term. Critics argue that trade agreements have not delivered as they have contributed to widening trade deficits with partner countries. However, the data require a more careful reading. India has recorded an average annual trade deficit of about \$62 billion with ASEAN, Japan, and South Korea over the past three years. But, a significant proportion of these imports comprises industrial inputs such as semiconductors, electronic components, capital equipment, and speciality chemicals, all of which are essential for domestic manufacturing. India's merchandise exports increased 40.6% from 2021-22 to 2025-26, from \$314 billion to \$441.7 billion, respectively. The total merchandise and service exports together touched \$860 billion in 2025-26 (Department of Commerce). The government is well on track to meet its Foreign Trade Policy 2023 target of \$ trillion in merchandise exports by 2030 through the signing of these FTAs. FTA utilisation among Indian exporters remains below its potential. To address this, the Trade Connect ePlatform has been established to help exporters identify FTA benefits. Further, MSME outreach programmes should reach smaller exporters to enable them to take advantage of preferential trade arrangements. While challenges such as trade deficits, low utilisation and inverted duty structures remain, effective implementation could help India achieve its long-term export growth and global trade objectives. India also faces challenges arising from an inverted duty structure (when import duties on raw materials are higher than on finished products, making it costlier to manufacture locally) in several sectors.

Sindhi community seeks details on 200 Kg silver donation to Ram temple

Lucknow: Amid the ongoing controversy surrounding alleged irregularities in donations and offerings made for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a representative of the Sindhi community has sought transparency regarding around 200 kilograms of silver bricks donated to the temple in January 2021.

Raju V Manwani, a businessman and representative of the global Sindhi community, while speaking to PTI Video in Leh on Thursday, said the silver bricks were donated on January 26, 2021, by nearly 200 devotees of the community from India and abroad as a contribution towards the construction of the Ram temple. According to Manwani, devotees had contributed varying quantities of silver bricks, ranging from one to ten bricks each, and the entire donation was handed over with faith and devotion for use in the temple project. He said no receipt was issued at the time of the donation, but the donors did not pursue the matter as they believed the contribution would be utilised appropriately for the temple's construction. However, in the wake of recent reports and the ongoing probe into alleged irregularities linked to temple donations and offerings, the community has sought information regarding the utilisation of the silver bricks and requested that receipts or relevant records be made available. Manwani said the silver donated by the community was valued at approximately Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 2 crore and that transparency regarding its use was necessary. He claimed that donors had initially been informed that the quality of the silver would be assessed, details regarding its utilisation would be shared, and receipts would subsequently be issued.

"We only want to know whether the silver bricks donated by our community were actually used in the Ram Lalla temple and to receive the relevant documentation," he said. Manwani clarified that neither he nor the donors had filed any case regarding the matter. He said he had acted merely as a representative of the Sindhi community and that records of all donors, including forms and payment details related to the purchase of the silver, were available. He said the community would fully cooperate with any investigation and provide all documents if sought by the authorities or the Special Investigation Team (SIT). Referring to the ongoing inquiry, Manwani said the SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government had already submitted its report and that the community would await any further action by the government.

Passenger's metal chain to blame for Purple Line delay: Bengaluru Metro body



A day after peak-hour services on Namma Metro's Purple Line were disrupted when a train's doors failed to close, officials revealed on Friday that a commuter's metal chain caused the snag. "Investigations by the operations and maintenance teams revealed that a metal chain belonging to a commuter was lodged in the train door guidance, preventing the doors from closing properly," Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) said in a statement.

"A detailed examination of the train and its door systems has confirmed that there was no technical malfunction in the train equipment," the statement added. BMRCL said all necessary safety protocols were followed before the train was cleared for service. The technical issue occurred at Cubbon Park Metro Station at around 7.36 pm on Thursday. When the doors of a train failed to close properly, commuters were deboarded at the station as a precautionary safety measure. The procedure took approximately 17 minutes to complete, causing temporary delays to the next five train services. Metro services were hit on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, Namma Metro operations on the Purple Line were affected by a technical glitch, which halted services during the evening hours. The operations only resumed on Wednesday morning. While an investigation into this incident is underway, officials said that damage to the electrified third rail powering the train led to the halt of operations. The Namma Metro in Bengaluru has a daily ridership of about 9 to 10 lakh, and the Purple Line alone caters to 4.50 lakh commuters. BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and MLC CT Ravi had slammed the disruptions on Namma Metro, saying the "alarmingly frequent breakdowns" could not "become the norm in a global city".

Gurgaon's sealing drive leaves tenants scrambling for housing

On June 19, Sanghamitra Pati, a 25-year-old marketing manager, was visiting her parents in Odisha when enforcement teams arrived at the building where she lived in Gurgaon's DLF Phase 3 to seal it. "My friends had to literally break the lock on my fully furnished apartment to rescue my clothes and critical documents before the premises were sealed," she said, recounting the sheer panic. Pati is among several young professionals and families hit hard by a sealing drive across residential areas in DLF Phases I to V that's targeting unauthorised commercial accommodations. On Thursday, a team of officials from the Gurgaon District Town Planner (Enforcement) went about pasting notices outside alleged illegal paying guest (PG) accommodations and guesthouses, and also slipped copies into the rooms of tenants.

PG A district town planning official pasting the notice in DLF Phase 2. The 'Public Interest Advisory' asks tenants to make alternative living arrangements. According to the public notice, the official deadline to secure new housing and avoid the inconvenience of the sealing action is June 30. When the sealing drive began last Thursday, many tenants said they received sudden phone calls telling them to pack their belongings and vacate their homes within hours. Four men working at a technology company, who did not wish to be named, said that their company does not have work-from-home. "We have to find a place soon, they should have told us sooner. We each pay over Rs 20,000 at least, including food, for a single room in our PG," they said, bringing down their luggage from an accommodation on Siris Road. The demographic of the tenants displaced extends well beyond young IT employees. "Families with toddlers and elderly parents had to leave their accommodation and shift to hotels. Most of the affected tenants are at work during the day," said a



guard outside a sealed property in DLF Phase 3.

Why the crackdown The ongoing crackdown, led by District Town Planner (Enforcement) Amit Madholia, is based on directives from the Punjab and Haryana High Court aimed at curbing zoning violations and unauthorised commercial activities in residential areas. In recent enforcement action at S Block on Nathpur Road, officials, accompanied by heavy police deployment, sealed 11 establishments. Madholia said the notices were issued beginning Wednesday as landlords had not conveyed the information to their tenants prior to the drive. The drive targeted prominent properties like 'Hotel Moonlight' and 'The Medici' hospital, alongside massive illegal PG facilities — including one spanning four floors with 72 rooms, and another operating 48 rooms out of a single apartment complex. Earthmovers were also deployed to raze illegal structures built in stilt parking spaces. The DTCP's advisory explicitly states that the department shall not be responsible for any loss or disruption caused to occupants. Madholia said the police will handle cases of deposits going unreturned and any landlord disputes.

2 arrested in 'encounter', Pakistan-made pistol seized



The Delhi Police Special Cell's counter-intelligence unit arrested two men during an early-morning shootout in West Delhi Thursday for their alleged involvement in the firing at singer Guru Randhawa's gym earlier this month. Police said the suspects, Sagar (20) and Haqeeqat (21), both believed to be first-time offenders, sustained gunshot wounds to their legs and are being questioned. They are accused, along with two others — Arman (19) and Tushar (21) — of opening fire at the Randhawa-owned 24 HS Gym on June 11. Officials said the attack was carried out on behalf of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Police said Sagar and Haqeeqat were riding a motorcycle when they were stopped by a police team in Paschim Vihar. The accused allegedly fired at the police team that had laid a trap; in response, the police returned fire, and the two sustained leg injuries. Made in Pak pistol

seized Police said they recovered a Pakistan-made TT 30-style .30-bore pistol from one of the suspects, and it matches the type allegedly used in the gym shooting. While the TT 30 design dates to the Soviet era, police said the seized weapon is a Pakistani-manufactured version of that model, which is often smuggled into India. Investigators added that criminals linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and other organised groups use sophisticated foreign-made firearms, often smuggled from Pakistan and other countries, to carry out targeted attacks, extortion-related shootings, and murders. Such weapons can fire multiple rounds within seconds, making them particularly dangerous, said officials. A motorcycle believed to have been used in the incident was also seized.

What the accused told police During questioning, police found that four men were allegedly working on the directions of Anil Pandit and Harry Boxer, who are said to be operating the Lawrence Bishnoi gang from abroad. They hail from the same area in Sonapat, and were allegedly promised a substantial sum of money in exchange for carrying out the shooting. CCTV footage purportedly captured two of them fleeing the scene after opening fire, police said. Police said the singer was targeted allegedly because of his close ties to actor Salman Khan. In an audio recording, a man purported to be Pandit can be heard saying: "Our brother Harry Boxer had called him [the singer] and warned him, but he didn't understand. This is just the trailer. We will kill him soon."

Two more cases booked against fake 'Gold Man' Surya Bhai



EMS News Agency, June 2 Hyderabad: Self-styled 'Gold Man' Surya Bhai is facing fresh legal trouble after the Attapur police initiated action in two separate cases, including a cheating allegation involving Rs 32 lakh and another related to an allegedly false police complaint.

According to the police, a man identified as Chari accused Surya Bhai of collecting Rs 32 lakh after assuring him that he would supply gold ornaments. However, the promised jewellery was never delivered, prompting the complainant to approach the police. As the alleged transaction falls within the limits of the Narayanguda police station, Attapur police registered a Zero FIR and transferred the case to the police station concerned for further investigation.

In another development, Attapur police have decided to register a case against Surya Bhai for allegedly lodging a false complaint. Officials said an inquiry into a complaint previously filed by him found the allegations to be unsubstantiated, prompting the police to initiate legal action for providing false information. Attapur police said Surya Bhai has not been arrested in either case. The cheating allegations will now be investigated by the Narayanguda police.

Who are the 8 arrested men, their role



The eight men booked for alleged theft, misappropriation of cash, embezzlement of funds and valuables donated to the Ram temple have been arrested, said Ayodhya Police. "All the accused were in Ayodhya and were arrested late Thursday night. Further questioning is underway. Police are preparing to present them before a magistrate," a senior official told PTI. On Thursday, an FIR was lodged at Kotwali Ramjanmabhoomi police station on a complaint by Krishna Mohan, a member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. This came two days after a Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the allegations, submitted its preliminary findings to the Uttar Pradesh government.

The eight men are: Avinash Shukla, Lavkush Mishra, Anukalp Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ramashankar Mishra, Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav and Subhash Srivastav. Most were involved in the donation counting work. "Subhash Srivastav: A retired bank employee, he was in-charge of the donation counting shifts at the Pilgrim Facility Centre. Ram Shankar Yadav alias Tinnu Yadav: Former driver of Trust general secretary Champat Rai, looked after temple functioning. Counting staff: Avinash Shukla, Lavkush Mishra, Anukalp Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ramashankar Mishra. Sources in Ayodhya said there were allegations that some among the counting staff had been slipping extra notes into currency bundles of 100 each and these were later shared. There could be action against more people, sources said. The FIR stated: "It is clear from the preliminary report of the SIT and available oral, documentary and electronic evidence that certain employees deployed for counting of donations have committed crime by stealing, misappropriating frequently. Based on the facts mentioned in the preliminary report of SIT and available oral, documentary and electronic evidence and financial records, registration of FIR is necessary... The FIR invoked BNS sections 305 (theft in protected place of worship), 306 (theft by an employee), 316 (5) (criminal breach)

INOX partners with Swedish firm to make drinking water 'microfactories'



INOX partners with Swedish firm to make drinking water, INOX partners with Swedish firm to make drinking water microfactories, inox drinking water microfactories, Ahmedabad news, Gujarat news, Indian express, current affairs INOX CVA will manufacture Wayout's proprietary water microfactories in India using its expertise in precision engineering, automation, modular fabrication and stainless-steel process systems.

Vadodara-based INOX India Limited (INOXCVA) has announced a technology partnership that aims to tackle one of India's water challenges — producing safe drinking water at the source, wherever available. INOX India is partnering with Sweden's Wayout International AB to manufacture decentralised drinking water "microfactories" in India. Unlike conventional drinking water systems that depend on centralised treatment plants and extensive distribution networks, the compact Wayout units — which Innox will now manufacture — are designed to produce drinking water at the point of need. Each unit can draw water from virtually any available source — sea, a borewell, industrial water, brackish water, river, lake or municipal supply — and subject it to advanced purification and controlled mineralisation before dispensing safe drinking water on demand. The process is monitored digitally in real time, while the automated system is designed to function with minimal human intervention, the company said. Under the collaboration, INOXCVA will manufacture Wayout's proprietary water microfactories in India using its expertise in precision engineering, automation, modular fabrication and stainless-steel process systems. The partnership marks Innox India's entry into the emerging decentralised water infrastructure segment, "strengthening India's role as a manufacturing base for advanced water technologies". Deepak Acharya, CEO, INOX India Limited, told this newspaper, "At INOXCVA, we have always believed that advanced engineering and manufacturing capabilities can be leveraged to address some of the world's most pressing challenges. The discussions with Wayout initially began for supplying stainless steel kegs for transporting water.

But, at Innox, we have built capabilities that enable us to manufacture highly complex equipment and systems for some of the world's most demanding industries... Water is among the most challenging requirements for the world and even India. Therefore, we are looking forward to bringing in Wayout's sustainable solution of the decentralised water infrastructure sector." Acharya states that INOX will first set up a prototype of Wayout's proprietary water technology platform to test the scale and efficiency of the project and consider launching the product directly. "The thought is that we can produce and distribute water, without using the single-use plastic bottles, through our precision manufacturing and stainless steel kegs. Innox will offer solutions across multiple sectors, including hospitality, residential communities, industrial facilities, and infrastructure projects.

How much do dark matter particles weigh?

What is the status of the SpaceX Mars mission? | Explained



Dark matter is an enigmatic invisible substance supplying five-sixths of the matter of the universe. Unlike photons, the particles of light, the particles of dark matter need to have non-zero mass or else the dense and intricate structure of matter on cosmic scales will not form. How light can a dark particle then be? For decades scientists thought this minimum mass was about 10-31 times the mass of a proton. But in May this year, theoretical physicists revised the limit and pushed it up by an order of magnitude, to 2.3 x 10-30 proton masses. This is a significant update in the world of dark matter.

Uniformly or in lumps? To understand these numbers and their importance, let us first build a mental picture of dark matter. Dark matter is said to be everywhere in the universe. Does that mean it is in your house? In 1922, Dutch astronomer Jacobus Kapteyn studied the motion of stars neighbouring the Sun and concluded the density of "dark matter" (using that term for one of the first times) must be 0.0003 solar masses per cubic light year. Since then, through a century of increasingly sophisticated measurements, the accuracy of Kapteyn's conclusion has held up remarkably well. This density of dark matter can be re-expressed as the heft of two protons per teaspoon, which means your house could contain dark matter with a mass equivalent of a trillion protons. But this would also be naive: Kapteyn's and subsequent measurements are only valid when regarding the million-cubic-lightyear volume and doesn't apply when we zoom in for a closer look. This is because stars, whose motion is used for the measurement, are themselves separated by a few light years. Whether or not dark matter is present on smaller length scales would depend on how it is distributed: either uniformly or in lumps.

An occasional visitor? Let's assume it is spread around like fine flour, which the standard theories of cosmology also predict. If it comes in lumps, the spacing between them may be as large as many light years and there will perhaps be no dark matter under your roof. Now, since we know the local density of dark matter, the value of the unknown mass of the dark

particle will determine the separation between two neighbouring particles. If it is 100 proton masses, the inter-particle separation will be 7 cm. Then dark particles at any given moment will not only be in your house but also in your head. If dark matter is made of an elementary particle, the heaviest it can be is about 1019 times a proton's mass. In that case the interparticle separation would be 30 km. So dark matter won't be a resident of your house but will visit occasionally (since the particles travel randomly at around 300 km/s). Then again, a 1020 gram agglomerate of dark particles would be apart by more than the size of the solar system, reducing our chance of discovering them.

Fluid rather than a flock? What about small masses? At 10-11 proton masses, every red blood cell in your body will contain a dark matter particle. But now quantum physics becomes important. Every object is also a wave, with its wavelength given by the inverse of its momentum. Thus the lighter a dark matter particle is, the larger its wavelength will be. For 10-11 proton masses, the wavelength will be about 2 cm, much larger than its micrometre interparticle separation. So for small masses, we must picture a collection of dark particles as a fluid rather than as a flock of grains. If we now dial the mass of a dark particle all the way down to 10-31 proton masses, the wavelength is 200 light years, about the size of a dwarf galaxy. The substance of a dwarf galaxy is chiefly in the form of dark matter, with only about 1% contribution from stars. This simple fact translates to a restriction on the dark matter particle's mass: it must be greater than 10-31 proton masses. If it were lower, its spatial extent would exceed the dwarf galaxy and we can't form a macroscopic object smaller than its microscopic constituents. The time of computers is this where the paper from May matters. Its authors have shown that this lore is too simplistic and that researchers can do something sharper. First, using data on how stars move in Leo II, a dwarf galaxy orbiting the Milky Way, they inferred the dark matter density in it as a function of the distance from its centre. This density profile isn't unique due to measurement uncertainties, so they generate a set consistent with the stellar data. Next, they numerically solved the Schrödinger equation after modifying it to account for gravity and obtained an ensemble of density profiles. Finally, they carried out a statistical procedure to match the two sets of density profiles — the empirical one from observing Leo II and the theoretical one from solving the equation. Their key finding here was that the inner regions of Leo II contained more invisible mass and which dark particles of 10-31 proton mass couldn't account for. Thus they surmised heavier particles are needed to accommodate the inner crowding. It's not everyday that particle physics gets to redraw a fundamental goal post by an order of magnitude. And it is a sign of our times that this could only have been done with computers as opposed to a blackboard. Nirmal



On March 15, Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX, announced on X that an uncrewed Mars landing mission will take place by the end of next year. The operation is expected to feature Optimus, a robot developed by Tesla — another company owned by Mr. Musk — as its passenger. "If those landings go well, then human landings may start as soon as 2029, although 2031 is more likely," Mr. Musk stated on X. The billionaire entrepreneur appears determined to achieve this milestone using SpaceX's reusable super heavy-lift launch vehicle, Starship.

Is it possible? The project has faced multiple setbacks in recent months, including two critical Starship test flight failures, or as Mr. Musk refers to them, "rapid unscheduled disassemblies". Despite this, he has not postponed the planned date for SpaceX's Mars mission. Originally announced in September 2024, the plan faces technical and logistical challenges, leading experts to question its feasibility.

What are some of the challenges? One of the main concerns is whether SpaceX will be able to develop and produce a fleet of auxiliary tanker spacecraft in time and successfully refuel Starship in orbit. To reach Mars, Starship's second stage must traverse approximately 5.5 crore kilometres in space. Timing is crucial, as every 26 months, Earth and Mars reach a "launch window" — a period when the two planets are closest, allowing for the most efficient space travel. If SpaceX fails to launch within this window, the mission could be delayed by more than two years. Currently, Starship has only demonstrated its ability to reach Low Earth Orbit (LEO). Its fuel storage capacity of 4,200 tonnes of propellant is insufficient for a Mars journey. To address this, SpaceX announced in April 2024 that it would use LEO tanker spacecraft to refuel Starship mid-flight. However, this plan has yet to be demonstrated, and there is no clear evidence that development is underway. With only 20 months until the next launch window, it is doubtful whether anyone can design, construct, test, and deploy these tankers in time, said Daniel Dumbacher, former

Deputy Associate Administrator of NASA's Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate, during a U.S. Congressional hearing in February. Beyond the issue of readiness, there is also uncertainty over whether SpaceX can manufacture and launch enough tanker spacecraft in a short time frame, given the complexity of in-orbit refuelling. This type of refuelling involves the transfer of super-cooled liquid oxygen and methane from a full tank to an empty one, operating under extreme pressure between machinery and the vacuum of space; a feat which has never been attempted before. SpaceX would need to launch and dock Starship's multiple tankers in quick succession to offset fuel evaporation, adding another layer of difficulty to the mission.

How has SpaceX fared so far? SpaceX has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to accomplish seemingly impossible feats. The successful deployment of reusable Falcon 9 rocket boosters and the development of the Dragon capsule have proven its capacity to design spacecraft that can withstand the harsh conditions of space. SpaceX's Starbase facility in Texas gives it a competitive edge, with the company reportedly manufacturing one Raptor engine per day and assembling the second stage of Starship within weeks. These production capabilities could prove essential in developing the required tanker spacecraft.

How will SpaceX land on Mars? Given that Mr. Musk envisions Starship as a vessel for human settlement, and that the 2026 mission will carry Tesla's Optimus robot, it appears likely that the spacecraft will attempt a surface landing. However, the current version of Starship lacks features necessary for landing, such as retractable landing gear similar to Falcon 9. While Starship has successfully landed on Earth, this was only possible with the "Chopsticks" vertical catching system, whereas no such infrastructure exists on Mars. Additionally, Starship's high failure rate in test flights suggests that further refinements are needed before it is considered reliable enough for such a critical mission.

What has NASA said? The Guardian reports that senior NASA officials are worried about potential conflicts of interest between SpaceX and the Department of Governmental Efficiency (DOGE), an advisory body to U.S. President Donald Trump, which Mr. Musk heads. DOGE has been pushing for extensive federal budget cuts, leading to the shutdown of NASA's Office of Technology, Policy, and Strategy, as well as the Office of the Chief Scientist. With these cuts, speculation has grown that more funding could be directed towards SpaceX's contracts with NASA, raising concerns about Mr. Musk's dual role as a government adviser and private contractor.

The thing about regret...: Simran Mangharam writes on sacrifice and love

A case for the Global South in securing Ukraine peace



Any great love really does demand sacrifice. Some loves get by on small ones: routine annoyances, concessions made and taken for granted; fidelity itself. Some great loves demand a lot more. They demand one change one's chosen path, and give up one dream for another. These can be among the hardest decisions to make. Choose the love, and one loses a version of oneself. The version that could have had that career, or that family, or that freedom. Usually, the love is worth it in the end.

But what is one to do with the feelings of true loss one is left holding?

Asma, a 41-year-old client of mine, moved to Australia after marrying 45-year-old Richard. She was an independent management consultant with an enviable client list here at home. In their year-long courtship, Asma felt confident about her decision to give it all up and start over. She visited Richard three times, in what would be her new home, and loved the country. She made an assessment of the people and culture, and believed she could rebuild, to a reasonable degree, the social and professional networks she was set to lose. Six months in, she has yet to secure a single consultancy assignment. She is also lonely. Where she had expected to form at least a small circle of friends by now, she says she has been unable to make one friend whose support or even time

she can take for granted. Richard is an extremely supportive partner, but her angst has been directed at him over months, and is now acting as a strain on their relationship too. Asma admits that she begrudges him his well-settled life in his home country. She can't help but feel that he gained everything and lost nothing in this bargain, she says. She admits that the term doing the most damage — "I left it all behind for your sake" — is both unhelpful and unfair. Her logical brain occasionally tries to interrupt. "Perhaps what I misjudged," she tells me, "is how hard it would be, and how long it would take. But it could still happen." She can make peace with the wait. She has time, and hope, she tells me. But that is her rational mind. As we know, our most extreme feelings can often come not from recognising a rational danger, but from those deep, unconscious places that hold our earliest fears, rejections and sorrows. It helps to dethrone the panic and put logic in charge (easier said than done, of course; yet, possible to do). Asma recognises this too. She is now working to embrace the idea that she misjudged this. We are working together to help her accept her feelings of loss, and accept that it may take years to piece her new life together.

She has begun talking to Richard, honestly but non-accusingly, about how she feels. I believe they can emerge from this stronger, with a deeper understanding of what they can weather, and a better understanding of how. It helps immensely that he is empathetic, and can talk about her regrets without seeing them as an indictment of the relationship. The two are now working together to expand her social circle. They plan to strategise on how to get Asma's career back on track next. My advice for anyone currently tussling with regret would be the three vital steps Asma has taken: Acknowledge the feelings with honesty. Admit the error. And give it time. These are the only ways to take the reins, and keep the regret from eating away at one's peace of mind, and at other things in one's life (hope, motivation, the very road ahead). Because left untethered, regret will walk you backwards through your life, and that view is never pretty.

As the devastating war in Ukraine edges toward a fragile ceasefire, recently reinforced by maritime and energy truces brokered in Riyadh, the question of a more enduring peace looms large, along with a related question: who will oversee its implementation?

Peace seems to be in prospect, as both sides appear weary of a long-drawn out attritional conflict. The recent Black Sea deal follows talks initiated by United States President Donald Trump, who has vowed to swiftly end the war that has now entered its fourth year. While western leaders, notably France's President Emmanuel Macron and Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, have floated the idea of a European-led peacekeeping force, this proposition is rife with challenges and contradictions. Russia has made it clear that no troops from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member-countries would be welcome, and most of Europe is already in NATO. A peacekeeping force whose very presence would be seen as a casus belli is evidently a non-starter. It is time for the Global South — a coalition of nations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America — to rise to the occasion and offer to lead a United Nations-backed peacekeeping mission in Ukraine. Doing so would not only ensure credibility and neutrality but also symbolise the emergence of the Global South as an indispensable force in shaping global stability. The perils of a European peacekeeping force Europe's enthusiasm for spearheading peacekeeping in Ukraine appears, at first glance, logical — its proximity to the conflict and its strategic stake in the region make it a natural candidate. While promoting a "coalition of the willing", Mr. Starmer has already promised to send British troops as part of any post-war peacekeeping operation. Yet, this logic crumbles under the weight of Russia's vehement opposition. Moscow views a European-led force as a NATO Trojan horse, a thinly veiled ploy to expand the alliance's reach into Ukraine. Such a deployment would not only exacerbate tensions but also risk transforming peacekeepers into catalysts for further conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov declared during a recent visit to Qatar that it would only "further fuel the conflict and stop any attempts to calm it down".

Moreover, European public opinion is far from aligned with the ambitions of its leaders. Polls reveal widespread resistance to deploying troops in what would undoubtedly be a perilous theatre of operations. When Mr. Macron first suggested French troops for such an endeavour earlier this year, opinion polls showed an overwhelming majority of French citizens opposing the idea. Even if political will is mustered, the logistical realities of sustaining such a mission without heavy reliance on U.S. support — which, in the Trump era, may or may not be available — would expose Europe's limitations. In a conflict fraught with delicate balances, the stakes are too high to gamble on an arrangement perceived as partial and provocative. The Global South has the credentials. The presence of NATO troops along the front line with Russian forces, even in a peacekeeping capacity, heightens the chances of a broader confrontation, a risk the international community can ill afford. In stark contrast, the Global South offers a compelling alternative. Unlike Europe, nations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have largely maintained a principled neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. This impartiality — symbolised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi hugging both Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, two weeks apart — grants them the moral high ground, making them uniquely positioned to maintain the trust of both Kyiv and Moscow. A peacekeeping mission led by the Global South would not only

de-escalate tensions but also inject a much-needed sense of fairness into the proceedings. The Global South's credentials are far from theoretical. The African Union (AU)'s record of peacekeeping, whether in Sudan, Somalia, or the Central African Republic, speaks volumes about its ability to navigate volatile environments. Similarly, BRICS member countries such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Indonesia have demonstrated their diplomatic acumen and operational expertise in UN peacekeeping missions. Even smaller nations such as Chile bring specialised skills, such as demining, which are crucial for Ukraine's reconstruction. Their track record in UN peacekeeping missions strengthens their credibility as potential leaders in Ukraine's stabilisation efforts. For a Global South-led peacekeeping mission to succeed, several conditions must be met. A robust and well-defined ceasefire agreement is, of course, a prerequisite. Equally critical is the demarcation of a clear front line, a task demanding meticulous negotiations. Financial and logistical support from western nations, particularly the European Union, would bolster the mission's capacity. All of these would be available if the operation was authorised by the United Nations Security Council and enjoyed the approval and cooperation of both parties to the conflict. Crucially, excluding NATO troops entirely would assuage Russian concerns and underscore the mission's neutrality. Finally, as India demonstrated in Liberia, the inclusion of female peacekeepers, whose presence has been shown to foster community trust and address gender-based violence, a persistent issue in conflict zones, would further enhance the initiative's legitimacy.

India, with its storied legacy in UN peacekeeping, is especially well-placed to take a leadership role. Having contributed over 2,90,000 peacekeepers to more than 50 UN missions, India's experience is unparalleled. Currently, more than 5,000 Indian peacekeepers are deployed in nine of the 11 active peace operations. In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an all-women police contingent to a peacekeeping mission, in war-torn Liberia. More than 160 Indian peacekeepers have paid the ultimate price serving under the UN flag so far — the highest number for any troop-contributing country. It was no accident that then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali turned to India to lead the UN peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia in 1992. As in that situation, India's neutral stance in the Ukraine conflict and its balanced relationships with Russia, the West, and Ukraine make it a natural choice to spearhead this effort. There is a strong case for India to shed its reticence and step forward with the assertiveness the moment demands. Meanwhile, China has been far more proactive, positioning itself as a potential peacemaker despite its close ties to Moscow. Beijing has also appointed a seasoned diplomat as its special envoy for Ukraine, whereas India has yet to take comparable steps. A peacekeeping mission in Ukraine under the auspices of the United Nations offers more than just a pathway to stability in Eastern Europe. It is an opportunity for the Global South to assert its rightful place at the high table of international diplomacy. For decades, this grouping — still too inchoate to be termed a bloc — has been relegated to the margins of global decision-making, its voice often drowned out by the cacophony of western powers. Taking the lead in Ukraine would signal a shift, a bold declaration that the Global South is not merely a passive observer but an active shaper of the world order. As we stand at this historic juncture, the choice is clear. The task of securing peace in Ukraine cannot be left to actors whose partiality risks undermining the very truce they are meant to protect.

Tamil Nadu sets a new high with 9.69% growth

Tamil Nadu's real economic growth rate of 9.69% for 2024-25 marks the highest for any State in the country, besides being the highest for the State in the past 10 years.

At constant prices (base year: 2011-12), the value of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of Tamil Nadu, estimated at ₹15,71,368 crore for 2023-24, had risen to ₹17,23,698 crore for 2024-25, according to the latest data available on the website of the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (both for advance estimates for the States and the second advance estimates nationwide). The previous high was 8.59% during 2017-18. The lowest (0.07%) was recorded during 2020-21, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The silver lining then was that at least Tamil Nadu recorded a positive growth, whereas many States had posted a negative growth. The term, real growth rate, denotes the rate that is exclusive of inflation. The one that includes inflation is called nominal economic growth rate. For instance, Tamil Nadu's nominal growth rate for 2024-25 is 14.02%, also the highest among States. Gujarat, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh are among those 14 States and Union Territories whose

growth rate data for the year have not been uploaded on the Union Ministry's website. The figure of real economic growth rate, as released by the Union Ministry, aligns with the projection in the State's maiden Economic Survey launched in the second week of last month. The survey had forecasted a growth of over 8% and the working paper from the Madras School of Economics (MSE), authored by veteran economists C. Rangarajan and K.R. Shanmugam and published in July 2024, predicted 9.3%. Eventually, the growth accomplished was higher than the two estimates. The State's performance has been driven by a 12.7% growth in the tertiary (services) sector and 9% in the secondary. The primary sector's performance is abysmally poor, with 0.15%. The tertiary sector's contribution to the State's Gross State Value Added is around 53%, followed by the secondary with 37% and the primary with 10%. Among the segments under the tertiary and secondary sectors, real estate, which covers ownership of dwelling and professional services too, has done well with 13.6%, followed by communication (and services related to broadcasting) at 13%, and trade, repair, hotels, and restaurants at 11.7%.

Rituparna Sengupta on Sharmila Tagore: 'She helped me understand the mother-daughter dynamic better'



When Sharmila Tagore became a bona fide star, she had journeyed from Satyajit Ray's masterpieces to Bengali and Hindi films, balancing arthouse and commercial cinema. But she would return to her Bengali roots whenever she could, her last being 14 years ago. As she approached her 80th birthday, she decided to end her self-imposed exile and expressed a desire to work in Bengali cinema again to actor-producer Rituparna Sengupta. "Why don't you find a good script? We can do it together," she suggested. Sengupta, a Bengali superstar for over two decades, took this as a cue to find a fitting story. "I wanted to re-establish her connect with the Bengali audience who admire her Ray films," she says. Coincidentally, her friend and director Suman Ghosh had engaged Tagore in a discussion about Ray's films in the US. "This led us to explore an untapped mother-daughter dynamic rooted in differing perceptions of time and space," says Sengupta, who, unlike Tagore, did not have a Ray-backed debut and built her career through mainstream films with a brief Bollywood stint. However, she embraced offbeat roles in films by Aparna Sen and Rituparno Ghosh. Winning the National Award for Ghosh's Dahan (1998) motivated her to produce woman-centric films like Alo, Potadar Kirtee (2016), a gangster-superstar romance, Ahaa Re (2019), a cross-border love story, and now Puratawn. The long pauses are because Sengupta is selective. "I am not a big producer but a passionate one. I love stories which inspire me or an issue which triggers me. I am not in the rat race of making money though it is important for survival. But I have seen that passion-driven scripts work. That's why I am producing short films too," she says. But she is a realist enough to stay away from direction. "That requires a different eye. I look at a script from an actor's lens and need a director to interpret and execute that vision," she says.

Puratwan has already been feted in the film festival circuit. Though Tagore dominates the screen, Sengupta insists the film shouldn't be seen from a woman's lens. "I am not an ultra-feminist. But I do believe in the power of the woman to make a difference in the script where other characters have equity too. I am not looking at messaging. I want the viewer to take back an emotion that can help them fill up spaces in human relationships," she says. Sharmila Tagore 1 Sharmila Tagore with Rituparna Sengupta. In the film, Sengupta plays a corporate professional struggling to balance work and relationships, while Tagore portrays her dementia-afflicted mother clinging to her past in her crumbling ancestral home. Despite her condition, she remains as concerned for her daughter as she was when packing her school tiffin. The daughter, seeking her mother's grounding presence, fails to realize that her mother tries to maintain relevance by repeating old rituals. She is also unaware of a long-held family secret that reveals the extent of a mother's protectiveness. "The daughter craves for her mother's re-

assurance although she too had not bothered to understand why her mother had clung to a lost world. We tend to invisibilise the elderly, expecting them to see the world through our prism, and take them for granted," says Sengupta. The film draws on reminiscence therapy, where dementia patients recall episodic memories from their past to maintain their sense of continuity and feel happy. "So, the mother is happy with her daughter, even though she sees her as a little child. Rather than alienating her, why not embrace her world," asks Sengupta. The film's layering required constant collaboration between Tagore and Sengupta. "Shooting on location wasn't easy but she co-operated. When we had trouble securing a mansion permit, she asked if we could switch locations. I insisted we couldn't, and she agreed to wait it out. Despite being an icon, Sharmiladi remained open to feedback, ensuring her performance was nuanced and authentic. She was emotionally invested," says Sengupta. "She reads a lot and is updated about the world around her but has old world grace. After every shot, she would take everybody's feedback. She was mentally agile but still had an actor's vulnerability. Without it, no performance can look real," adds Sengupta. The two women bonded on the sets. "She helped me understand the mother-daughter dynamic better. I lost my mother to kidney disease just after the film was screened at the MAMI fest in Mumbai. Sharmiladi comforted me when it mattered," says Sengupta. "She also shared behind-the-scenes moments of her films and that was a learning experience too," she adds. With two superstars from different eras sharing the screen space, did Sengupta ever feel intimidated?

Why India's education system fails marginalised communities — and how to change it

The story I share is not mine alone. It belongs to millions of students from marginalised communities across India who face systemic barriers in their pursuit of education.

Born to illiterate farming parents in Buldhana district of Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, the idea of quality education seemed like a distant dream from my earliest memories. Our village school had broken benches, overworked teachers, and no electricity for days. Yet, it was the only gateway to a future beyond the fields. For students like me, cities like Pune and Mumbai represented the only hope for proper education, but they might as well have been foreign countries: unfamiliar, expensive, and often hostile to our presence. The journey from rural India to urban educational institutions is fraught with invisible barriers. The financial burden alone crushes countless dreams before they can take flight. Even for those who manage to secure admission, the cultural transition is brutal.

Our accents are mocked, our clothes scrutinised, and our food habits ridiculed. We are made to feel like outsiders in our own country. This constant othering creates a psychological burden that privileged students never have to carry. Many talented students from marginalised communities drop out, not because they lack ability, but because the system is designed to make them feel they don't belong.

A dubious concept The concept of merit in Indian education purports to be objective while ignoring the vast inequalities in preparation and opportunity. A student from an elite Delhi school who has access to the best coaching, books, and networks is judged by the same standards as a student from a village school with no library and intermittent electricity. The so-called merit that is sought to be evaluated by competitive exams is often just a measure of accumulated privilege. The numbers don't lie: in India's top educational institutions, the representation of SC, ST, and OBC students remains shockingly low, especially at higher levels of study and faculty positions. Competitive exams like JEE and NEET exemplify this systemic bias. Coaching centers in Kota and Delhi churn out toppers, but these expensive programmes are out of reach for most rural and poor students. The language of exams itself becomes a barrier. English-medium students have a clear advantage over those educated in regional languages. Even when reserved category students clear these exams, they face additional challenges. Many report being treated as "quota students" rather than equals, and their achievements are constantly questioned. India proudly proclaims its demographic dividend, and the potential of its young population to drive economic growth. But this promise seems hollow for marginalised communities. Oxfam's latest reports reveal that India's economic growth has been accompanied by widening inequality. The benefits of development are captured by a small elite, while Dalits, Adivasis, and OBCs, who together constitute the majority of India's population, are left behind.

At the five highest-ranked IITs, SC students constitute only about 10% of PhD enrollments, while ST students make up a mere 2%. In faculty representation, it's even lower. Data shows that over 90% of professors in these institutions come from upper-caste backgrounds. Some premier institutes have no SC/ST faculty members.

This lack of representation creates a vicious cycle



From rural India to urban institutions, the struggle for quality education for marginalised students in India is fraught with invisible barriers

for marginalised students who face additional barriers to success. The system effectively reproduces itself, generation after generation. The barriers begin early. Government schools in rural areas and urban slums lack basic infrastructure, qualified teachers, and proper learning materials. The mid-day meal might be the only reason some children attend school at all. Meanwhile, privileged children attend well-resourced private schools with trained teachers and abundant extracurricular activities. By the time both groups reach college, the gap in preparation is enormous. The discrimination continues in campus life. Marginalised students often face social exclusion, microaggressions, and sometimes outright casteism. Hostel rooms are segregated along caste lines in some institutions. Students from certain communities are barred from sharing tables in dining table. The mental toll of constantly navigating these hostile environments leads many talented students to drop out. Those who persevere often find the job market equally biased, with caste networks determining access to the best opportunities. Breaking the vicious cycle Breaking this cycle requires systemic change. First, we must redefine merit to account for the unequal playing field. A student who scores 80% in a village school with no proper facilities has demonstrated more potential than a student who scores 90% with every possible advantage. Second, we need to strengthen and expand reservation policies to ensure proper representation at all levels, including faculty positions. Third, elite institutions must implement robust support systems: mentorship programs, remedial classes, and mental health services — to help first-generation students succeed. The current system maintains caste and class hierarchies by presenting them as natural outcomes of merit. Real reform requires acknowledging this fundamental injustice. Education should be the great equaliser, but in India, it accentuates exclusion. In a knowledge-driven global economy, denying quality education to large sections of population isn't just unjust, it's national self-sabotage.

The next tech challenge is to prove you are a human: Srikanth Nadhamuni, Founder CTO, Aadhaar

Srikanth Nadhamuni is the founder CTO of Aadhaar. He set up the technology centre for the development, design, and operations of the Aadhaar system. He is also the Managing Trustee of the eGovernments Foundation, which he co-founded with Nandan Nilekani in 2003, working on improving governance and public service delivery in Indian cities.

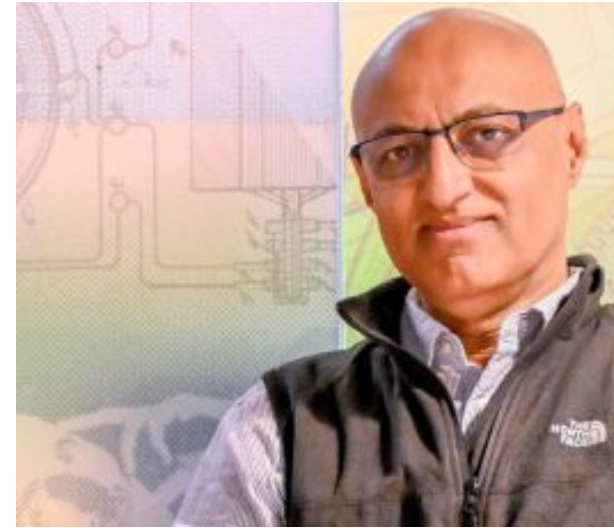
He is also the chairman of 10BedICU, a health tech initiative trying to change the face of critical care in remote and unreachable regions of the country, and co-founder and chairman of Trustt, a fintech initiative working to digitise banking operations and enhancing the same with conversational AI. Srikanth is an engineering graduate from the University of Mysore and has a masters in electrical and computer engineering from Louisiana State University. He spoke to indianexpress.com on challenges in building Aadhaar, his passion for changing the face of critical care and, ultimately, the health sector in India, his initiatives to take digital public infrastructure (DPI) to various developing countries, and his work on 'personhood credentials' as a way to fight misinformation. Edited excerpts: Srikanth Nadhamuni: There is one such anecdote that comes to mind. I was driving from Delhi to Dehradun, and we had done a lot of spawework on the biometric system design for Aadhaar. I had asked one of our volunteers, Raj Mashruwala, to meet with Professor Jim Wayman of San Jose State University — who was a leading expert in biometric systems — to validate our assumptions about our biometric-based ID system. Mashruwala called up to say that deduplication at an India level with 1.3 billion people was impossible. He said that we would need six football fields of servers to do the deduplication, and even then, the errors would be high. And this was when the project had not even started yet. We spoke to Nandan Nilekani, and we decided if the software does not solve the problem, we would need to build a chip for the same. I'm a chip designer myself. Later on, we somehow figured out how to solve the problem without building huge data centres. Aadhaar founder CTO interview "We revamped and digitised the Bengaluru city property tax system and ensured that people could pay taxes in any place near their office or their home," says Nadhamuni about the impact of the eGovernments Foundation. (Express photo/ Jithendra M) It was a new territory for us as techies, and the risks were high. There were questions like: Will Iris scans work at an India scale? Will the diversity of India make it very hard to enrol people? Will the error rate start mounting as we start adding more and more people? Some of these were not fully understood yet, though we had modelled it and had figured it out mathematically. We also ran a huge pilot. Things could have gone terribly wrong. Later, discussing our Aadhaar project in an article, a professor from the London School of Economics said India will drown in a sea of false positives because of the huge population. He said that as we add more and more people, the chances of people's fingerprints looking alike will increase. However, all of it got solved with a brilliant team of technologists and computer scientists.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Tell us about your role in eGovernments Foundation and its impact. Where is it headed?

Srikanth Nadhamuni: Nandan Nilekani and I set up the eGovernments Foundation in 2003. Initially, our work was to create municipal ERP systems for improving urban governance and enhancing service delivery for citizens in urban local bodies. We revamped and digitised the Bengaluru city property tax system and ensured that people could pay taxes in any place near their office or their home. Earlier, it was all in leather-bound books and was error-prone. Property tax management is just one of the modules, and now our DIGIT platform encompasses aspects like public grievance redressal, ward works, building plan approval, and birth and death registration and certification. We are also working on the accounting side of things with fiscal discipline as the focus. Now, our eGovernment platforms and tools help city governments in a lot of ways from sewage disposal to water management to tracking healthcare systems like distribution of mosquito nets in Africa. We are working in about 14 countries across the world. As for international outreach, India has now become a global leader in digital public infrastructure (DPI). A lot of countries, especially in the Global South, like our model of open source, population scale, and equitable access. India's playbook for DPI is improving governance across the world. Many developing countries are looking for the kind of solutions that India has perfected to improve their economy, get payments going, improve tax collections, and provide frictionless services to citizens. It is replacing the expensive Western models with large companies charging them hundreds of millions of dollars. I think India is playing a wise and generous role in helping countries through its expertise and technology. There is Aadhaar, UPI, eSign, DigiLocker, ONDC, and so on.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: What is the 10BedICU? What does it do, and what has been its impact?

Srikanth Nadhamuni: 10BedICU is an initiative to change the face of critical care in remote and rural areas of the country using tech. We have 220 of these 10BedICU units across the country. The focus is on critical care. It is a fully digitised ICU with a digitised nursing station. It is a tele ICU with the centre being linked to a nearby medical college or hospital, which serves as a knowledge hub, and the patients can be monitored and serviced from the hub. The doctors and nurses serving in these 10BedICUs are rigorously trained in various critical care protocols and also in telemedicine to access specialists at the hubs and work on their advice during emergencies. Using conversational AI, nurses and doctors can talk to each other seamlessly in different languages. We are also using AI to generate discharge summaries. Nurses can ask questions in their own language, tell the status of the patient, and receive an answer in the language of their choice on the next steps to be followed. The government provides land, staff, electricity, Internet and supplies. We, from eGovernments Foundation, provide all the equipment, technology and training free of cost, with funds raised through donations and philanthropic contributions. We have built very exhaustive training protocols for critical care and basic life support for emergencies. The entire electronic medical records, video, and conversations are managed from the ICU hub. When we say 10BedICU, it means that there is one ICU and 10 beds for patients. It is run in collaboration with the government. MOUs have been signed with 10 states. In every state we have an



agreement with, we will have at least one hospital in every district of the state. In Karnataka, we have 43 10BedICUs. I also mentor a group called the Open Healthcare Network (OHC), which has created a healthcare platform called CARE. It has been recognised as a Digital Public Good. CARE powers all our 10BedICU hospitals. It is also India's most active open source project with 900 contributors. We are also looking to expand it from critical care to areas like oncology and other specialisations. We are working with Tata Memorial hospitals to train our doctors and nurses in oncology protocols, and using our tele-ICU facilities their patients could interact with their doctors sitting in Tata Memorial cancer centres.

Venkatesh Kannaiah: Can you explain what Trustt does and the kind of impact it is having?

Srikanth Nadhamuni: At Trustt, we are building a digital layer for banks, to help them in their lending and distribution of financial products across India. The product portfolio includes digital lending, digital distribution, digital identity, and multilingual conversations. Imagine that a bank was available on your phone in the village, and you can talk to it in Kannada, Tamil or Hindi and do all the banking. Open an account, do your KYC, apply for a loan, and figure out all the products that are available. I want to buy a buffalo. Will you give me a loan? How long will it take? What do you need from me? This is the problem we are trying to solve in a local language with the mere use of the phone. It is relevant not just for the rural customers. It will even help the urban customers of banks to do their transactions faster. It is replacing an older manual method of lending, which was slow, error-prone and not digitised. It is not modelled on any US system. Actually, the banks in the US have pretty old banking systems. They have much more paperwork than we do. There are a few banks in Europe which have done it better — going fully digital. Venkatesh Kannaiah: Can you tell us about the apex committee to create AI Centres of Excellence and the way forward for the same? Srikanth Nadhamuni: I am a member of the apex committee to create AI Centres of Excellence, an initiative of the Government of India. They want to create AI Centres of Excellence in healthcare, agriculture, sustainable cities, and education. The budget is around Rs 300 crore per sector and there would be one nodal AI Centre of Excellence for each of the focus areas. My interest in this is that we can build a Digital Public Infrastructure in each of the focus areas out of this initiative so that the impact from these research projects and initiatives is more widespread. For example, AIIMS and IIT Delhi are building good AI models to detect breast cancer. IISc is building models to detect oral cancer from smartphone photographs. Some of them are working on tuberculosis. Can you imagine something like this helping diagnosis at every government hospital? In agriculture, our researchers are looking at interesting themes. For example, pollination happens because of bees. Now, how do you make sure that the beehives are there in your fields? There is a sound with a certain frequency that the queen bee makes when it is around. We can track it and IIT Ropar is building devices using AI to ensure that the queen bee stays in the hive, and if it is not there, to let the farmer know that the queen bee has left. As for sustainable cities, we are looking at traffic congestion and traffic patterns and using AI to help reduce pollution in cities, rerouting traffic and alerting policemen whenever there is traffic congestion. Sridhar Nadhamuni "As the world marches towards AGI, it is hard to distinguish AI from humans," says Nadhamuni. (Express photo/ Jithendra M) The multiplier effect of such projects and initiatives will happen when this knowledge is digitised, put in a cloud, distributed and used across the country. That is the DPI approach. You have to run it on the cloud. It has to be a good product. So, I am trying to see if we can push all this into a DPI approach. Venkatesh Kannaiah: How would AI be impacting identity platforms like Aadhaar or payment platforms like UPI? Srikanth Nadhamuni: I have written a paper co-authored with a bunch of researchers from OpenAI, Harvard, MIT, and UC Berkeley. This paper explores 'Personhood-Credentials,' a method of proving your humanness in this fast-changing digital landscape.

As the world marches towards AGI, it is hard to distinguish AI from humans. It's going to be difficult to figure out whether the video call you just had was with a real human or an AI bot. Let me tell you, you will not be able to find the difference. This is a great challenge that we are facing with AI-led bots. Imagine the impersonation, fraud and ransom attacks that would happen or are happening right now, and the impact they would have on trust and transactions online. I think we have to first register everybody in person through multiple ways.

Aadhaar biometrics is a good method. There is some process of verification, but when I get onto a Zoom call or a video call, can I be authenticated on the platform that I am on? That is the challenge — To prove that you are a human and not a bot. If trust erodes on the Internet, imagine the impact it would have on knowledge, communication, and transactions. So this is where the personhood credentials concept comes in. When do I see it becoming a product? Aadhaar can be used to build a personhood credentials product quite easily.

Shree Charani keeps focus on World Cup as India gear up for must-win Australia clash

Hyderabad: India kept their ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 semi-final hopes alive with a crucial five-wicket victory over Bangladesh in Manchester. Speaking on JioHotstar's 'Adidas Match Centre Live', India spinner Shree Charani discussed her three-wicket haul, India's mindset heading into the virtual quarter-final against Australia.

"I just kept things simple; I didn't try to do anything extra and focused on what I had practiced. My line, length, and variations and I knew that if I kept hitting the right areas, the wickets would come. Against Bangladesh, I was clear about my plans. I wanted to bowl in the right channels and not give away easy runs. The pitch had a little bit of help, so I just stuck to my strengths and let the ball do the rest. Picking up two wickets feels good, but more importantly, I was happy that I could contribute to the team's win," Shree Charani said.

On the catches dropped off her bowling, Shree Charani said: "I didn't get frustrated by the catches dropped off my bowling. Dropped catches are part of the game. It happens to every bowler at some point. You can't control

what happens after the ball leaves your hand. All you can do is keep bowling in the right areas and trust your teammates. So, it's okay. I don't let it affect my focus. I believe that if you keep doing the right things, the rewards will come. At the end of the day, whatever is written for me, it will come."

On India's mindset going into the must-win game against Australia, the left arm spinner said: "Yes, the Australia game is going to be an important one. We want to win and finish on top of the group stage. But we are not going to treat it any differently. We are going to keep things simple. There's no need to overthink. We have played against them before, and we know what to expect. It's about executing our skills on the day. One game at a time. That has been our approach throughout this tournament, and we will continue with the same mindset." On not focusing much on her World No. 1 ranking in T20Is, Shree Charani said: "To be honest, right now my focus is completely on the World Cup. We are in the middle of the tournament, and that is all that matters to me. I'm not thinking about being the number one ranked T20I bowler or any individual rankings."

Sooryavanshi's mantra is 'I don't give a damn about any bowler': Jurel

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi may have caught the imagination of the cricketing world with his exploits this season in the 2026 IPL but the secret to his success lies in the simplicity of his approach, according to his Rajasthan Royals teammate Dhruv Jurel. Jurel had himself played an impressive knock against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Eliminator on Wednesday – a 21-ball 50, but he and almost every player who took the field was overshadowed by Sooryavanshi's record-breaking knock. The 15-year-old smashed 97 in 29 balls and over the course of the innings, he broke Chris Gayle's record for most sixes in an IPL season. He also fell just three runs short of Gayle's record for fastest IPL century. "The best thing about Vaibhav that I have noticed is that he doesn't plan anything," Dhruv Jurel said at the post-match press conference. "Because he practices a lot and he always backs himself. That's what he does every time he goes out and plays. The best thing about him is that he backs himself. He doesn't even have a shadow of doubt that 'I am not able to do it,' he added. "When we go to an academy, (we are told) 'Don't watch the bowler, watch the ball,'" said Jurel. "As 17-year-olds, we always watch the bowler (and think) he's a big name. But really, he just watches the ball. That's all." "His mantra is 'I don't want give a damn about any bowler.'" Having already scored 175 in the



Under-19 World Cup final, Sooryavanshi showed no signs of pressure in the Eliminator. Put to bat first by Sunrisers Hyderabad, he raced to his fifty off 16 deliveries and maintained the tempo throughout his whirlwind knock. Sooryavanshi blasted a barrage of sixes with every SRH bowler, including captain Pat Cummins, bearing the brunt. Overall, the teenager hit as many as 12 sixes and five fours on the night. This took his tally of sixes for the season to a whopping 65. Gayle held the previous record of 59 which he had set in the 2012 season of the IPL.

Tanisha-Dhruv get the serve to sing, beat Watanabe-Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16



On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. (Badminton Photo) On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. Jwala Gutta had once said she picked Ashwini Ponappa as a partner – not because of her smashes, which were excellent of course. But due to her serves. Now, Tanisha Crasto hoping to reach Jwala's heights in mixed doubles (she reached World No 6 with V Diju), is proving why a swell serving game can literally win you matches.

To get to match point at the Singapore Open, Tanisha sent forth a bamboozler that confounded none less than Yuta Watanabe – a seemingly benign backhand wobble serve that left the Japanese skill-master confounded. Watanabe is a twice Olympic medalist and four-time World Championships podium finisher, including two silvers at mixed doubles. The Japanese 28-year-old isn't easily frazzled. The two hooting serves at the end, were just the finishing touches of a firecracker game. Her lari (garland) style of explosive bursts, as she strikes a whisk-like rotating pattern with Dhruv Kapila and goes about creating chances while never giving up, has been one of Indian badminton's most underrated progressions.

On Thursday, at the Super 750, Tanisha and Dhruv lost the opening set, before sensationally bouncing back to beat Watanabe and Maya Taguchi 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 and reach the quarterfinals. Tanisha is very different from India's OG mixed doubles star Gutta whose game relied on her game smarts and big leftie attack with V Diju. Tanisha's game is more like popping up at different parts of her own court with swift movements, and finding gaps on the opponent's court before lasering in her ping shots with great energy and useful unpredictability which makes

her resemble the Diwali mala cracker that travels and explodes. The decibel levels carry value of their own, like they used to for Carolina Marin.

Already an Olympian in women's doubles and of versatile utility in team events, she's not had the easiest times, given her reactive-reflexive high-risk game, which can cop a fair amount of errors. But she thrives in the chaos that mixed doubles tends to be, doesn't get afraid of front court confrontations, and can surprise opponents when she actually gets into textbook patterns. Dhruv is more methodical, the muscle from the back, who creates openings for Tanisha, but has a good understanding of forecourt exchanges too. His accuracy varies and injury concerns bog him down, but together they have the potential to pierce the thoroughly difficult top tier of mixed doubles someday. Losing the opener 21-8 to Watanabe-Taguchi, the Indians ensured an early lead in the second. Tanisha would send one over the Japanese heads to reach 11-8, but it was in breaking the 14-14 deadlock that Tanisha showed first signs of her audacity. She went after Watanabe with her angled smashes smacking one into his ribcage. She would pop up the shuttle at the net making a Watanabe kill difficult, because it was an arch, not a tumble at scything height to go up 18-14. A Taguchi service error gave Indians the set point to level. But it was Tanisha who once again made the shuttle pop up like a champagne cork, using her racquet frame, that gave them the 21-17 second set.

It is a testament to Tanisha's ability to play clutch, because even the highlights package had more of the Japanese winners through the game. The Indians, not technically the most refined, were merely staying afloat till 9-11 in the decider. In some rallies – like the one to get to 12-11 – Tanisha's only job was to scream panicked prods to Dhruv to take the shuttle, as he did all the work. There is no unspoken understanding or some poetic connection between these two that makes them a good pairing – just clear (and loud) communication where a 'Dhruv' or 'Me!' is yelled out by Tanisha, when going for the shuttle. But the ruckus brings decisiveness. At 16-12 to pull away for a crucial lead in the decider, the perfect game came together. Dhruv managed to use his power to push both Watanabe and Taguchi to the back court, and Tanisha smartly turned her racquethead for a cross drop to the forecourt empty space. Still the Japanese came to within one points at 17-16. It's when Tanisha attacked Taguchi's serve savagely with an upright backhand return to create a melee. To get to 20-16, Tanisha sent her trick serve that saw Watanabe fumble. And on the third shot of the next points, it was once more her awkwardly exchanged return that drew out her error. The piercing warcry followed.

Ranjit Singh Award for a historic sporting career. "The AFI is deeply saddened by the passing of former AFI Vice President, Raja Randhir Singh ji. AFI extends its heartfelt condolences to his family & friends during this difficult time.

"He served as Secretary General of the IOA and the OCA and was also a member of the IOC. He was elected president of the Olympic Council of Asia, leaving behind a lasting legacy in the Olympic movement and Asian sports administration.

Why Roland Garros groundskeepers are turning to salt to save clay from heatwave



For decades, clay courts have been associated with long rallies, high bounces and physically draining tennis. But at this year's French Open, players have repeatedly said Roland Garros is playing faster than usual. The reason is not a change in balls or court construction alone — it is the weather. Paris is currently experiencing an unusually intense early-summer heatwave, with temperatures crossing 35°C during the opening week of the tournament. Groundskeepers say the conditions are unlike anything they have dealt with in late May. "What we're experiencing is unprecedented," Philippe Vaillant, head of court maintenance at Roland Garros, told the Associated Press. "Even the weather services say it themselves: it's unprecedented to have temperatures this high for such a long period at this time of year." The heat is fundamentally altering how clay behaves. Why hot weather changes clay courts

Clay courts are moisture-dependent surfaces. Unlike hard courts, their playing characteristics are directly tied to how much water is retained beneath the top layer of crushed brick. When temperatures rise sharply, moisture evaporates faster. The surface becomes drier and harder, which changes the speed and bounce of the ball. Players at Roland Garros have already noticed the difference. World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka said the conditions were "boiling hot" and that "balls are flying, everything is much faster." Traditionally, clay slows the ball down because moisture creates more friction between the surface and the ball. But dry clay reduces that resistance. The bounce becomes quicker and lower, favouring aggressive baseline hitting over attritional rallying. The shift is significant because Roland Garros has historically been the slowest Grand Slam surface. This year, players are increasingly comparing conditions to hard courts during afternoon sessions. The science beneath the red clay What appears to spectators as a simple layer of red dirt is actually a complex five-layer structure nearly

80 centimetres deep. At Roland Garros, the courts are built using large foundation stones, gravel, volcanic rock residue, compacted limestone, and finally a thin layer of crushed red brick. According to Vaillant, the limestone layer is the most critical component because it retains moisture and provides structural stability. The red brick layer is mainly cosmetic and helps players slide. If the limestone dries out excessively, the court can crack. More importantly, the surface becomes dangerously slippery. Vaillant compared overly dry courts to an ice rink, warning that players could lose footing while sliding into shots. "The crushed brick layer is 3 to 5 millimetres thick," Vaillant explained. "The most important part is the limestone layer underneath. That's the actual playing foundation. This limestone layer must remain moist at all times. It's compacted crushed stone maintained through water supply. If we let it dry out too much, the courts could crack."

"The crushed brick is mainly there for colour and as a material that provides some sliding ability and an important visual contrast, since the limestone is almost white," Vaillant said. How Roland Garros is keeping the courts alive To combat the heat, tournament staff have dramatically altered maintenance routines. "We're forced to water the courts a little more, of course," Vaillant said. Normally, clay courts are watered at fixed intervals. This year, groundskeepers are soaking the courts every evening to replenish moisture deep beneath the surface. During matches, courts are also being lightly watered between sets — something rarely required under standard French Open conditions. Another key tool is calcium chloride, a salt compound spread across the courts in flake form each morning. "Which is basically just salt," Vaillant said. "We spread it over the courts in flake form in the morning. It melts on contact with water and helps retain surface moisture." The compound slows evaporation and helps the courts retain consistency through long matches played in direct sun. Groundskeepers say the substance effectively "reactivates" moisture in the crushed brick layer during the day. The maintenance operation is massive. Around 200 groundskeepers are working across 18 competition courts and 15 practice courts during the tournament. Why the courts have not deteriorated further Ironically, heavy rainfall earlier in May may have prevented a larger problem. "We were able to let the rain do its job," Vaillant said. "It recharged all our water-retaining layers." That reserve has helped the surface survive several consecutive days of extreme temperatures without severe cracking. Without those earlier rains, the courts may have dried out far more aggressively.

Over 80 surfers from six states set for Indian Open of Surfing 2026 in Mangalore

Mangalore: Indian surfing reaches a historic milestone this week with the upcoming seventh edition of the Indian Open of Surfing 2026. As a major event on the national surfing circuit, it will showcase many of the country's top surfers at Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach in Mangalore from May 29 to 31. As surfing prepares for its debut at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games later this year, the championship takes on greater importance beyond just winning domestic titles.

It includes competitions across categories such as Men's Open, Women's Open, Under-18 Boys, Under-18 Girls, Under-14 Boys, and Under-14 Girls. The event is expected to draw over 80 athletes from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Goa, making it a potentially landmark week for many of India's leading surfers.

The Indian Open, organised by the Mantra Surf Club and Surfing Swami Foundation under the Surfing Federation of India (SFI), has gradually become a key event on the national sports calendar. The Karnataka Government has maintained its support for the event for the seventh year in a row. This year's championship is likely to be the last major domestic evaluation before India chooses its squad for the Asian Games, making performances over the three-day event especially important. With limited spots in the national team, the competition has become much fiercer in recent months. This has turned the Indian Open into one of the country's most significant domestic surfing events to date.

Each heat in Mangalore is expected to have wider implications as selectors keep assessing athletes in preparation for India's debut in continental surfing. The event will also serve as the second stop in the National Championship Series, following the inaugural Little Andaman Pro 2026 held earlier this season, enhancing its significance in the domestic rankings. Much of the focus in Mangalore is expected to be on a group of surfers who have consistently led Indian competitions for the past few seasons. Ramesh Budihal is among the top contenders, renowned for achieving a major milestone in Indian surfing. He made history at the Asian Surfing Championships in Mahabalipuram by becoming the first Indian to reach the Open Men's final, ultimately winning a bronze medal.

This accomplishment was a significant breakthrough for Indian surfing on the international stage and established him as one of the nation's leading competitive surfers. His skill in handling pressure and his consistent performance in critical heats make him a formidable competitor in the Indian Open. Shivaraj Babu enters the championship with strong momentum after winning the Men's Open at the inaugural Little Andaman Pro earlier this year. Hailing from Tamil Nadu's competitive surfing scene, Shivaraj is known for smart wave selection, consistent performance in different conditions, and strategic discipline during contests. As the race for Asian Games qualification reaches its crucial stage, another impressive showing could greatly improve his standing.

Kishore Kumar remains one of India's most promising young surfers. In recent national competitions, he has gained recognition for his technical skill, calmness, and consistency in high-pressure situations. His previous performances at the Indian Open and several impressive results domestically in recent seasons have solidified his status as one of the country's top surfers, setting the stage for what could be a career-defining year. Srikanth D remains a strong competitor, increasingly recognized on India's surfing scene for his technically refined style. Instead of just aggressive maneuvers, he excels in rhythm, precise execution, and tactical awareness in close heats. His consistent performance at national championships has significantly boosted his reputation, especially as debates about Asian Games selection grow more intense. The women's competition is also anticipated to draw considerable attention, as several of India's top surfers are scheduled to compete in Mangalore. Kamali



P enters the championship as a key figure in Indian women's surfing. Hailing from the Mahabalipuram surfing scene in Tamil Nadu, she has represented India on international stages while consistently being among the top performers domestically. Her accomplishments have significantly contributed to boosting the visibility and profile of women's surfing across the country. With fluid wave riding and sharp tactical skills, she continues to be a strong contender for the event. Goa's Sugar Shanti Banarse has built a reputation as one of the country's top female surfers through her remarkable performances at national championships. Known for her fearless style and ability to adapt to varying surf conditions, Sugar has enhanced her standing both locally and internationally in recent years. Her participation adds to the anticipation of a highly competitive women's field at Tannirbhavi. Beyond the water contests, the Indian Open of Surfing has become a key showcase of the sport's quick growth along India's coastlines. Recently, Tamil Nadu surfers have excelled in various national events, while surfers from Karnataka aim to leverage their local knowledge and the conditions at Tannirbhavi for this year's competition. The championship has played a key role in establishing Dakshina Kannada and Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach as emerging hubs for surfing and ocean sports in India, greatly enhancing the region's sporting reputation and coastal tourism appeal. As Indian surfing approaches a historic debut at the Asian Games, the significance of this year's Indian Open goes well beyond medals, rankings, or national titles. Over three days on Karnataka's coast, top surfers from the country will compete not just for national bragging rights, but possibly for the chance to represent India at one of Asia's premier sporting events.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi powers Rajasthan Royals into Qualifier 2

Mullanpur: The cricketing world once again bowed down to the generational talent of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi following his six-laden 97 off 29 balls before Jofra Archer broke the backbone of Sunrisers Hyderabad's muscular batting to set up a 47-run win for Rajasthan Royals in the IPL Eliminator here on Wednesday. The 15-year-old Sooryavanshi smashed as many as 12 sixes in his breathtaking knock and missed the IPL's fastest hundred by just a few runs. Rajasthan Royals slipped to 243 for eight after an ordinary last five overs, but the runs proved more than enough against a power-packed Sunrisers side that was all out for 196 in 19.2 overs. Archer removed the destructive trio of Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head and Ishan Kishan in the powerplay to effectively seal the Royals will face Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 2 here on Friday, with the winner meeting Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the final. The night belonged to two X-factor players – first Sooryavanshi, who toyed with the likes of Pat Cummins, and Archer, who ran through the Sunrisers' top order with his extra pace.

The Testaments review: Chase Infiniti struggles with limited material in Handmaid's Tale sequel



have nothing in common. They are privileged in the world of Gilead, for there are many others who have it much worse than them (We already met them in the prequel). Agnes is asked to guide the new 'pearl girl' Daisy (Lucy Halliday), a teenager who has been brought in from the 'sinful world' of Canada, and this is when the plot triggers. Their dynamics are straight out of a teen drama but unlike any teen show set in the regular world, the basic rules of engagement for these girls are Gilead-approved.

Despite the limited material that Chase Infiniti has here (after her brilliant outing in One Battle After Another), she plays Agnes like a doe who has the potential to be a cheetah. She is the 'it girl' who has (mostly) everything going for her. Her adoptive father (Nate Corddry) actually cares for her, but her vamp-ish stepmother Paula (Amy Seimetz) wants to get rid of her as soon as Gilead allows. The grooming she has had under Aunt Lydia is her biggest baggage, but she is yet to learn that this is weighing her down. She is vulnerable enough that you want to protect her, but she strongly carries the rebellious spark of her on-screen birth mother. Girls like Agnes are taught to prepare for their Prince Charming and are groomed to believe that even if he is a man in his 50s, it's 'God's will'. Daisy, who has come in as a spy from Mayday, pushes Agnes enough to look beyond her cocoon, and you see a sliver of hope as the season comes to an end. By then, it's too little too late, especially since the audience already knows what Gilead is all about.

Daisy is the very definition of that young soldier who has nothing to lose, and as she screams, "it's my choice" to June and follows it up with her willingness to die for the cause, you realise why it's only the young ones who are brainwashed into actually fighting the battles their previous generation started. She acts poised in public but it's only a matter of time before Aunt Lydia catches up to her. The Testaments review The Testaments is a teen drama set in the dystopian world of Gilead. The grown-ups get to do very little here. We finally get to see the pre-Gilead life of Aunt Lydia, and how she grabbed a seemingly authoritative spot in a world run by men. The rest of the Aunts here are like the guards at gas chambers who have their blinders on. With all the talk about God that happens on this show, you are often reminded that even as a concept, 'God's will' is a tool to fool those who don't know any better.

It would be impossible to get into the world of The Testaments without knowing anything about the world of The Handmaid's Tale, so you wonder why creator Bruce Miller (who was also the creator of the prequel) treats many plot points as revelations.

The horrors of Gilead aren't unknown to the viewers. It is, of course, macabre to watch teenage girls killing a man, but if you have witnessed Gilead in all its gory glory, it isn't shocking. You also wonder why Agnes' identity is treated like some sort of a secret when you already know who she is from the very start. It is quite odd that the show does not recognise Agnes' race while they keep bringing up her "lineage". A world as whitewashed as this cannot be blind to one's race. You also can't help but think that even though the show is supposed to be a 'dystopian' USA, girls and women in Afghanistan are actually living horrors much worse than this in the present day.

Months after controversy, Samay Raina shares glimpse from India's Got Latent sets



versy surrounding it.

What was the controversy around India's Got Latent?

Samay Raina's India's Got Latent had landed in major trouble after remarks made by guest podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia during one of the episodes sparked widespread outrage online. Ranveer had asked a contestant an explicit question involving their parents, leading to severe backlash against the creators and panelists. The controversy triggered multiple FIRs, police investigations, and intense public criticism, eventually forcing Samay to delete all episodes of the subscriber-only show. The incident also reignited national debates around freedom of speech, obscenity in comedy, and creator accountability on digital platforms. Following the backlash, Samay took a break from public appearances before making a comeback in 2026 with his stand-up special Still Alive. In the show, he candidly spoke about the emotional trauma and mental struggles he and his family endured during the controversy. He then appeared on The Great Indian Kapil Show.

Samay Raina has hinted at the return of his controversial show India's Got Latent by sharing a picture from its shoot on Thursday — nearly a year after the show landed in massive controversy over alleged vulgar remarks made during one of its episodes. The comedian first took to Instagram Stories to announce the revival of his COB chess tournament for longtime fans. Sharing the update, he wrote, "Organising my favourite chess tournament for old times' sake! I still love you chat." He also revealed the players' list, featuring names including Anirban Dasgupta, Vaibhav Sethia, Joel Dsouza, Tracy Alison, Prakhar Gupta, Vivek Desai, and Balraj Ghai.

Samay announces the return of India's Got Latent in another story, Samay Raina cheekily referenced his fanbase by posting a clip from his stand-up special Samay Raina: Still Alive. Sharing the video, he wrote, "Latent fans in my dms," while the clip played his comic line, "Yeh chess khel raha hai yaha pe?" However, it was his next story that truly grabbed attention. Samay Raina Samay Raina's Instagram Story screenshot.

Samay surprised fans by sharing a behind-the-scenes picture from the shoot of India's Got Latent. Though he blurred the faces of the guests to keep their identities a secret, he captioned the image, "Uski bhi shooting chal rahi hai dostoo." The photo featured Samay holding a microphone while comedian Balraj Ghai stood behind him, seemingly confirming that the show is back in production. The update comes nearly a month after an alleged picture from the sets of India's Got Latent Season 2 surfaced online. The viral image reportedly featured actors Alia Bhatt and Sharvari on the panel. However, neither the makers nor the celebrities commented on the speculation. Coincidentally, YouTuber AARY's latest vlog also added fuel to the buzz around the show's return. In the vlog, his fiancée Yogita revealed that his mother had once been invited to appear on India's Got Latent but couldn't attend because the family was travelling to Goa.

"Did you know Auntie had received a call to appear on Samay Raina's India's Got Latent, but she couldn't go because we were in Goa? If she had gone, we would have sat in the audience. However, whenever she is called next, we will all go," Yogita shared. Earlier this year, Samay had already hinted that he planned to return with the second season of India's Got Latent despite the contro-

Sai Pallavi shares heartwarming family moments, calls spring 'beautiful'

Southern star Sai Pallavi shared a heartwarming glimpse into her springtime family moments and calling the season "beautiful" because of their presence in her life. Pallavi shared a reel video featuring all the fun time she spent with her parents, grandparents, and her sister. For the caption, she wrote: "My Delilah! Spring is

when you're here. Thank you for making our lives beautiful." Pallavi also added the song Plain White T's iconic 2005 track Hey There Delilah, which was nominated at the 50th Grammy Awards in 2008 for Song of the Year, as the background score for her video montage.

Kartavya 'child star' Harpal is actually 33; more popular than Aishwarya, Shah Rukh Khan



Yuvhvir Ahlawat, who played the role of Harpal in Netflix' Kartavya, is actually 33 years old. Yuvhvir Ahlawat, who played the role of Harpal in Netflix' Kartavya, is actually 33 years old. Netflix' latest film Kartavya has been in the headlines since its release recently. The movie's leading star Saif Ali Khan impressed fans once again, with his cop portrayal. However, there's one question that has gotten everyone thinking — who is the Haryanvi boy Harpal, for whom Saif takes on the entire system? The actor's name is Yuvhvir Ahlawat and unlike what people have been assuming, he isn't a child artist but a 33-year-old man. He is currently trending and has already beat Vijay, Aishwarya Rai, Jr NTR, and Shah Rukh Khan, to emerge as the most popular star on IMDb right now.

Who is Yuvhvir Ahlawat?

In Kartavya, Yuvhvir Ahlawat plays Harpal, a child who is being mentally and physically abused and is pushed to commit murder. Many may believe he is a new face but the actor has been doing theater for nearly a

decade. He has also been associated with director Feroz Abbas Khan's grand play Mughal-e-Azam: The Musical. He has performed on both national and international stages. He marked his big screen debut with Taapsee Pannu and Bhumi Pednekar's Saand Ki Aankh, where he played Chandro Tomar's son. He also featured in Ranbir Kapoor's Shamsher. He has appeared in Bobby Deol and Vikrant Massey-starrer Love Hostel. The actor belongs to Sheriya, a village in Jhajjar, Haryana. His father, Gyan Singh Ahlawat, served in the Border Security Force. While discipline was ingrained in the family, Yuvhvir was shorter than his six-foot-something elder brothers and had innocent face of a child. This also led to his casting in Kartavya. However, the actor is in his 30s. In 2019, when his first film Saand Ki Aankh hit the theatres, he had revealed in an interview that people thought he was a child, even when he was 28 years old at the time. Because of his childlike look, audiences assumed he was a child artist, and hence, he is able to essay roles of very young boys on screen. Every week, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) compiles a list of the most popular Indian celebrities, based on the number of visits on their profiles. While actors who have theatrical releases are mostly on top of the list, but this week, Yuvhvir Ahlawat aka Harpal was at the top of IMDb India's top 30 list. He beat many superstars like Aishwarya Rai, Vijay, and Mohanlal. The number of visits on his IMDb profile increased a lot since Kartavya's release on Netflix on May 15. Yuvhvir defeated Aishwarya Rai (at rank 3 after her Cannes visit), Vijay (at number 4 after becoming Tamil Nadu CM), Jr NTR (at number 24) and Shah Rukh Khan (out of the top 30) in the list. As per IMDb

MasterChef India winner Pankaj Bhadouria shares breast cancer diagnosis: 'Need prayers'



Celebrity chef and MasterChef India winner Pankaj Bhadouria has revealed being diagnosed with breast cancer. On May 28, she shared the news with her loved

ones on social media. She requested everyone to keep her in their prayers and gave a glimpse of her ongoing treatment. Taking to her Instagram handle, Pankaj posted a Story of herself talking about the diagnosis and her condition. In the video, she shared, "I just wanted to share with you all that I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Since all of you are like an extended family to me, I wanted to share this with you personally. Right now, I truly need your prayers and support. As they say, prayers work miracles. So please keep me in your prayers." The celebrity chef also shared a photo of herself from the hospital bed. Along with the post, she wrote in the caption, "I have been diagnosed with Breast Cancer. Need your prayers and support." In another story on Instagram, Pankaj shared a video of herself from the hospital while undergoing various medical tests. In the clip, she was seen in a hospital robe with a cannula on her hand. The text read, "Going for tests and more tests.....not a happy place to be." About Pankaj Bhadouria Pankaj Bhadouria gained a lot of popularity after winning the debut season of MasterChef India in 2010, becoming the nation's first-ever MasterChef winner. Earlier, she had worked as an English teacher and reportedly quit her 16-year-long teaching career to participate in the cooking reality show. After winning the show, she also became a television host of many cooking shows, such as Chef Pankaj Ka Zayka, Kifayati Kitchen, 3 Course with Pankaj, and Rasoi Se — Pankaj Bhadouria Ke Saath. She is also widely known on social media, through her YouTube channel and short videos of cooking tips and food recipes.

Kattalan review: Antony Varghese's actioner feels like a series of reels disguised as a film

Kattalan Movie Review & Rating: About 10-15 minutes into Kattalan, a feeling of puzzlement began to creep in. Suddenly, it felt like I had accidentally fast-forwarded through much of the movie and landed significantly ahead in the runtime, missing key points in the story. But then it hit me: I was in a movie theatre, and our technology hasn't advanced enough for each person to control the projection in a cinema hall without affecting others' experiences. After questioning my senses for a few more minutes, I slowly realised the issue lay with Kattalan itself, as the makers seemingly forgot to cover the massive pits they had carved out to trap the wild elephants in the story, rendering the whole movie incoherent.

Don't Miss | Drishyam 3 movie review: A close shave for Mohanlal, Jeethu Joseph as Georgekutty battles himself Aanakkolli, a hamlet located in the woods adjoining the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, is known for its wild elephant population. As the tuskers start posing a threat to the villagers' lives, they seek the help of notorious hunter, Maari (Sunil). Pretending to offer a helping hand, he enters the territory and slowly takes control of Aanakkolli, and eventually becomes the head of a cartel involved in ivory trafficking. Years later, Maari faces a new challenge in his business after the cartel's fallout with Eddy (Kabir Singh Duhani). In his effort to fight back, he ropes in Antony Varghese (Antony Varghese Pepe), a smart, courageous, and strong ruffian. However, as time passes, it becomes evident that Antony has his own agenda for joining Maari's gang. Watch Kattalan trailer here: While there are scores of movies with poor, shoddy writing, Kattalan might be the first Malayalam film that gives the feeling that no writing went into it. My point is not that its script is bad or that the setup, conflict, and payoff are underwhelming, but rather that there's hardly any writing in it. Instead of adding action sequences at regular intervals in the narrative, director Paul George and his team have essentially added some story as filler between the numerous action sequences. Even before establishing the world or the characters, Kattalan quickly jumps into the conflicts. Although we see Maari's flashback (played here with sharp menace by Raj Tirandasu) and how he took over Aanakkolli and the cartel, even his character remains on the surface. Pretty much every time we see Maari, he is engaged in some massive illegal activity or planning one, with the focus solely on the crime and never on him. The only time we see him otherwise is in a lamely choreographed item song. In no time, we are picked up and dropped off in the middle of the battle between Maari and Eddy, where pretty much nothing happens other than fights and shooting. Although Action Sandhosh and Kecha Khamphakdee's stunt choreogra-

phy is sleek and the action set pieces are stylish overall, they just aren't enough to uplift the movie beyond a certain point.

Even after Antony's entry, there's essentially no change in the way the story progresses. While one could argue that omitting his backstory and not sharing more details about him are a means to keep his character a mystery, this is pretty much the case with everyone else, and none of the characters possesses any real substance. Hence, one can only dub this lack of depth a major shortcoming in the script by Paul, Joby Varghese, and Jero Jacob. Either the writers thought a skeleton of a story was enough to make a feature film, believing the rest would be handled by action choreographers, or the movie has been invidiously butchered at the editing table, resulting in key portions of the narrative being lost. Whatever the reason, it has only ravaged Kattalan. Belonging to a shared film universe that includes director Haneef Adeni's Nivin Pauly-starrer Mikhael (2019) and the Unni Mukundan-led Marco (2024), Kattalan had the potential to be what its predecessors weren't: a decent movie. While Mikhael was plagued by silly writing, Marco was hollow to its very core, making it seem as if it was created solely for the title of "most violent Indian film ever." Both films centred around the feud between a few characters and offered little space or scope for further exploration.

In contrast, Kattalan revolves around a populace, their oppression, and the exploitation of forest resources. However, the makers never delve into any of this and focus solely on the stunt sequences, which, unfortunately, don't provide an adrenaline rush. Kattalan serves as definitive proof that no amount of electrifying background score and slow motion can create mass appeal that isn't already present in the script. Worse still, most moments in the movie feel as though they were designed solely with the intention of being cut into short reels for social media after Kattalan's OTT release. What further detracts from the experience is author-screenwriter Unni R's dialogues, which sound better suited for a literary work than a movie. Also, the film's blatant normalisation of the radicalisation and weaponisation of children is disturbing. Although Kattalan features many characters, not even Antony's role is meaty. When unveiling character posters earlier, the movie's makers had revealed that Kattalan would feature two characters, Malik (Hanan Shaah) and Mano (Shon Joy). While they both make frequent appearances as Antony's henchmen, we don't even hear their names properly in the movie, let alone see them having any identity. Similarly disappointing is Dushara Vijayan's Lucy and Hipzster's (from Aavesham fame) Alokah, who get nothing more than initial buildup.