

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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Revanth Reddy Charts Global Tourism Roadmap for Telangana; Focus on Eco-Tourism, Heritage Revival and Mega Investments



the iconic Purana Pul bridge. He suggested rerouting traffic, wherever feasible, to protect heritage structures while transforming them into attractive public tourism spaces. The government also plans to expand Urban Forest-based eco-tourism projects across the CURE region by appointing dedicated officers to accelerate implementation. Global Investment Summit Preparations Begin In a significant push to attract large-scale domestic and international investments, the Chief Minister directed officials to begin preparations immediately for the Global Investment Summit, scheduled for December. He instructed the Tourism Department to formulate investor-friendly policies, identify high-value tourism projects, and establish high-level coordination committees to position Telangana as a preferred destination for global tourism investments. The review meeting was attended by Chief Minister's Advisor K. Ramakrishna Rao, Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, Tourism Special Chief Secretary Vani Prasad, and other senior government officials.

Hyderabad, July 6: Setting an ambitious vision to position Telangana among the world's leading tourism destinations, Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday unveiled a comprehensive roadmap that prioritizes eco-tourism, heritage conservation, world-class infrastructure, and global investments to drive the state's next phase of economic growth. Chairing a high-level review meeting of the Tourism Department at the Bodhi Pavilion in the MCR HRD Institute, the Chief Minister directed officials to fast-track flagship tourism projects, ensure strict adherence to timelines, and strengthen inter-departmental coordination for seamless execution. Eco-Tourism at the Core of Telangana's Growth Strategy Emphasizing sustainable development, Revanth Reddy instructed officials to harness forest lands within Hyderabad's core urban region for eco-tourism in coordination with the Forest Department. He also proposed developing the forest stretches in the Future City region into international-standard tourism destinations, drawing inspiration from the successful Gurranguda Eco Park model. The Chief Minister underscored that every project should balance environmental conservation with tourism-led economic development, creating immersive nature-based experiences while safeguarding ecological assets. Hyderabad's Landmark Destinations to Receive Global Makeover As part of the government's vision to elevate Hyderabad's tourism profile, several iconic destinations are set for a major transformation. The Chief Minister directed officials to develop Taramati Baradari into a world-class cultural and heritage destination while upgrading Durgam Cheruvu into a vibrant tourism hub with enhanced visitor infrastructure. He also instructed authorities to modernize the Manjeera and Dilkusha Guest Houses, ensuring premium hospitality standards that cater to both domestic and international travellers. Vikarabad Identified as Telangana's Next Tourism Hub The government has identified Vikarabad as a flagship destination under the Tourism Hub Development Programme. Revanth Reddy directed officials to redevelop the Sri Veerabhadra Swamy Temple on the lines of the successful Yadagirigutta model and establish a dedicated governing board to oversee its administration and long-term development. Heritage Conservation Meets Urban Tourism Highlighting the importance of preserving Hyderabad's rich architectural legacy, the Chief Minister called for a comprehensive conservation strategy for historic landmarks, including

Rs 338.60-Crore Four-Lane Road Project to Transform LB Nagar-Ibrahimpatnam Corridor



Foundation Stone to Be Laid by Roads & Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on July 7 Hyderabad, July 6: In a major boost to road infrastructure and regional connectivity, the Government of Telangana will launch the Rs 338.60-crore Modern Four-Lane Road Project covering key areas of the LB Nagar and Ibrahimpatnam Assembly Constituencies under the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM). The Foundation Stone Ceremony will be held on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 10:30 AM at Thorrur Village, Abdullapurmet Mandal, Rangareddy District. The project has been taken up with the special initiative and support of Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri A. Revanth Reddy. The foundation stone will be laid by Hon'ble Minister for Roads & Buildings and Cinematography, Sri Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, who will attend the event as the Chief Guest. The programme will also be attended by Minister for Information

Technology, Industries & District In-charge Minister Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Member of Parliament Sri Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Ibrahimpatnam MLA Sri Malreddy Rangareddy, Chairman, Telangana State Road Development Corporation (TGRDC), Sri Malreddy Ram Reddy, along with other public representatives and senior officials. The ambitious project will provide modern four-lane roads with central lighting and improved road infrastructure across Hayathnagar, Thorrur, Koheda, Anajpur, Abdullapurmet, Banda Raviryal, Kuntloor, Pasumamula, Taramatipet, Injapur, Brahmanpally, Ragannaguda, and adjoining areas. Once completed, the project is expected to ease traffic congestion, improve road safety, reduce travel time, and accelerate economic and urban development across the region. Media representatives are invited to attend the programme and provide comprehensive coverage through print, electronic, digital, and social media platforms. Event Details: Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2026 Time: 10:30 AM Venue: Thorrur Village, Abdullapurmet Mandal, Rangareddy District Issued by: Sri Malreddy Ram Reddy Chairman, Telangana State Road Development Corporation (TGRDC)

Last mile governance must effectively reach all regions: CM

Political management and bureaucratic action should work together to achieve development and good governance: CM

Comprehensive action plan should be prepared for resolving grievances: CM



Amaravati: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said last-mile governance must effectively reach every constituency. Political management and bureaucratic action should work together to achieve development and good governance. He directed officials to ensure that the Real-Time Governance (RTG) Centre delivers real-time responses to citizens' grievances and emergencies. He stressed that prompt response is the key to providing better public services. The Chief Minister suggested multi-department coordination meeting headed by Chief Secretary to strengthen inter-departmental response mechanisms. Referring to the recent fishing boat mishap off the Visakhapatnam coast, in which fishermen went missing, he said the effectiveness of the government's response depends on how quickly and efficiently various departments coordinate during emergencies. He also directed officials to ensure that the RTG Centre functions round the clock to serve the public. After returning to Amaravati following his five-day district tour, the Chief Minister reviewed the functioning of the RTG Centre at the Secretariat today. Reviewing governance initiatives, the Chief Minister said, "We are using AI-based methodologies to measure citizen satisfaction in Chittoor district. Field vis-

its by officials help us understand public opinion directly. Pending applications under the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) must be disposed of on priority. A comprehensive action plan should be prepared for resolving PGRS applications across departments and categories. Collectors and senior officials must take responsibility to ensure visible results on the ground. The Chief Minister directed officials to take special steps to establish Anna Canteens in tribal areas. He also stressed the need to significantly reduce crime against women and completely curb ganja networks across the state. He instructed officials to widely publicize the government's anti-ganja initiatives and noted that the Centre's vision of making India a drug-free nation should guide the state's efforts as well. He further asked officials to continuously assess the outcomes of government schemes and programmes. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should be issued for drinking water supply, operation of Swachha vehicles for waste collection, and door-to-door garbage collection. The Chief Minister directed officials to clear the accumulated 23 lakh metric tonnes of legacy waste in municipalities and municipal corporations within three months and called upon public representatives to closely monitor the drive. He reiterated that creating zero-waste urban local bodies should be the state's objective. The Chief Minister instructed officials to classify grievances received from citizens and through PGRS into financial and non-financial categories to facilitate faster resolution. He asked Collectors and departmental officials to give special attention to grievance redressal. He also encouraged departments to adopt best practices followed elsewhere and focus on innovation in addressing governance challenges. The Chief Minister further instructed all government departments to analyse the outcomes achieved through AWARE 2.0 within one month. He also called for an action plan to improve communication network connectivity across the state by establishing mobile towers in remote areas and directed officials to engage with telecom operators for speedy implementation. Minister Kolusu Parthasaradhi, Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad, Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta and senior officials participated

Congress, BRS Enacting Political Drama Over Kaleshwaram Corruption, Alleges Telangana BJP

Chief Minister to explain what he described as the government's sudden "soft approach" towards the Kaleshwaram issue. He alleged that both the Congress and the BRS were acting in concert while "gambling with the lives of the people of Telangana."

One ATM Replaced by Another Rao alleged that while the previous BRS government spent nearly Rs 1.30 lakh crore on Kaleshwaram, turning it into an "ATM," the present Congress government was attempting to create "another ATM" in the name of the Pranahita-Yellampally-Chevella project. He warned both parties against playing politics with irrigation projects, saying that farmers and the people of Telangana should not become victims of political and financial mismanagement. BJP Questions HYDRAA's 'Selective' Demolitions The BJP state president also expressed strong displeasure over the functioning of HYDRAA in Hyderabad, alleging that demolition drives were being carried out selectively.

He questioned why houses belonging to poor citizens were being demolished while alleged illegal constructions linked to the AIMIM were being left untouched. Referring to the Fatima Educational Institutions, Rao alleged that official records and court proceedings had pointed to violations of statutory norms, yet no action had been taken because of what he termed the Congress government's "political friendship" with the AIMIM. Demand for Equal Enforcement Rao asserted that the law must be enforced uniformly, insisting that there cannot be one set of rules for the poor and another for politically influential organisations. He demanded immediate action against all illegal structures allegedly linked to the AIMIM in accordance with High Court directions and warned that the BJP would launch a statewide public agitation if the Congress government, the AIMIM and HYDRAA continued what he described as a "biased and discriminatory approach."

Hyderabad, July 6: Telangana BJP on Sunday paid rich tributes to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary, with state party president N. Ramchander Rao leading the commemorative event at the party's state headquarters in Hyderabad. Garlanding Dr. Mookerjee's portrait, Rao hailed him as a visionary nationalist who played a decisive role during the Partition in ensuring that West Bengal remained an integral part of India. He said Dr. Mookerjee dedicated his life to the ideals of nationalism, unity and selfless public service, inspiring generations of political workers. Congress, BRS Accused of Shielding Kaleshwaram Corruption Launching a sharp attack on both the ruling Congress and the opposition BRS, Rao alleged that the two parties were "enacting political dramas" over the alleged irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project while avoiding accountability.

He criticized the Congress government for delaying repair works despite the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) reportedly highlighting serious geotechnical and structural concerns related to the project. The government's failure to initiate restoration measures reflects gross negligence and indifference towards public safety, he alleged. Targeting the previous BRS regime, Rao claimed that Kaleshwaram was converted into an "ATM" through large-scale corruption, alleging that the project was exploited for political and financial gains. He further accused Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy of abandoning his earlier aggressive stand on the alleged scam and limiting action to a few officials instead of pursuing those allegedly responsible for the massive financial irregularities. Demanding transparency, Rao asked the

Chief Minister to explain what he described as the government's sudden "soft approach" towards the Kaleshwaram issue. He alleged that both the Congress and the BRS were acting in concert while "gambling with the lives of the people of Telangana."

Illegal Educational Institution on FTL Land Raises Serious Questions Over Government's Commitment to Protect Lakes and Students

Bhayanagar District General Secretary Aedla Pandarinath has alleged that an illegal educational institution, operating under the name Fatima Owaisi Educational Institution, has been functioning on Survey No. 62, Salkam Cheruvu, in the Chandrayangutta Assembly Constituency, on land falling within the Full Tank Level (FTL) area of the lake. According to the allegations, despite allegedly lacking approval from the Education Department, the institution has continued to conduct academic activities by arranging hall tickets through other educational institutions and facilitating the issuance of certificates, thereby placing the future of hundreds of students at serious risk. The Telangana Government, led by Hon'ble Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has repeatedly asserted its commitment to protecting lakes, removing encroachments from FTL and buffer zones, and safeguarding public lands through HYDRAA. However, a criti-

cal question remains unanswered: Why has HYDRAA not taken action against the alleged encroachment by Fatima Owaisi Educational Institution on Salkam Cheruvu? If illegal structures across the state are being demolished in the interest of environmental protection, why is this institution seemingly being treated differently? The public deserves transparency and equal enforcement of the law without discrimination. It has also been pointed out that, during proceedings before Justice N. V. Shraavan Kumar, officials of the Education Department reportedly informed the Court that no official permission had been granted to Fatima Owaisi Educational Institution. If this is the case, another important question arises: Did GHMC ever grant building permission for the structure constructed within the FTL area? Ordinary citizens are required to comply with stringent regulations, obtain multiple approvals, and pay substantial fees before constructing even a residential building. Why, then, should

any institution be exempt from these legal requirements? The continued absence of a clear response from the concerned authorities has only deepened public concern. Aedla Pandarinath has demanded that the Telangana Government immediately order a comprehensive investigation into the institution's legal status, verify all approvals related to education and construction, and ensure that the law is applied equally to all. He further urged the Government to direct HYDRAA to take appropriate action if violations are established, remove all illegal encroachments from the FTL area, restore and protect Salkam Cheruvu, and safeguard the academic future of affected students through lawful and transparent measures. He stated that the fight for environmental protection, the equal application of the law, and justice for students will continue until appropriate action is taken by the Government.



Vessel with Indians struck today had taken US warning shots last month too

On May 15, the Guinea-Bissau-flagged MV Jalveer received warning shots approximately 30 nautical miles off the Oman coast and was directed to turn back toward the Gulf of Oman. Indian Naval units were positioned within 20 nautical miles of the vessel at the time. Meanwhile, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said Thursday's strike was carried out after the vessel attempted to transport Iranian oil through the Gulf of Oman in violation of a US-imposed blockade on Iran, in force since April 13. The blockade bars vessels of all nations from entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas. A US aircraft fired two Hellfire missiles into the ship's engine room after the crew repeatedly failed to comply with directions from US forces. CENTCOM said MV Jalveer was the third commercial ship hit by American forces that week.

In Thursday's attack, the vessel was struck around 11 am IST near Shinas, Oman, approximately five nautical miles from port limits or outside port limits (OPL). An officer in the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), Mumbai, told The Indian Express the attack was carried out by the US Navy. The vessel's Mumbai-based manager, Shoolin Ship Management Private Limited, conveyed the information to authorities.

The attack knocked out the vessel's communication systems, causing delays in receiving updates, but the vessel was not in danger of sinking and there was no threat to lives on board, the officer added. "No casualty has been reported, and all the crew members are reported to be safe. The managers of the vessel are coordinating in the matter and providing necessary assistance

to the crew. The communication system of the vessel is down and inoperational due to the attack, due to which there is a delay in the information being made available," the officer said on the condition of anonymity, adding that the DGS is maintaining close liaison with the ship manager and other stakeholders while monitoring the situation. CENTCOM said it has hit nine non-compliant vessels, redirected 135 ships that complied, and allowed 42 vessels carrying humanitarian aid to pass since the blockade began.

This comes a day after the Palau-flagged tanker MT Settebello (IMO 9162916) was struck by a missile in Oman's Search and Rescue Region around 8 am IST on June 10. CENTCOM said Settebello had also attempted to transport Iranian oil. The vessel had 28 crew members on board, including 24 Indians, two Pakistanis, one Ukrainian and one Russian national. Emergency procedures were initiated and a search launched for three missing Indian crew members namely Chief Engineer Suresh Patnala, Engine Petty Officer (Fitter) Shivanand Chaurasiya, and Cadet Aditya Sharma. The vessel owner subsequently confirmed the deaths of Chaurasiya and Sharma after their remains were found and identified. Patnala remains missing and search and rescue operations are continuing. MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre) Mumbai has sought assistance from MRCC Oman, and DGS officials are in contact with the families of the affected crew members. The Indian seafarers on board MT Settebello were recruited through World Maritime Energy Private Limited, Soulite Ship Management Private Limited, and Deewine Ship Management & Marine Services Ltd.

'Gangsters using social media to build influence': Bengaluru police seek removal of 1,500 accounts, 1,000 reels

The Bengaluru police have identified and sought the removal of nearly 1,500 social media accounts and over 1,000 reels and URLs across multiple platforms in the last five months to curb the online glorification of criminals. According to senior police officers, the accounts regularly post reels, videos, photographs, and other content glorifying 'rowdy sheeters' and gangsters, often portraying them as local celebrities and role models. Much of the content included birthday celebrations, rallies, fan gatherings, and tribute posts created by associates and supporters of known offenders.

Among the social media accounts and reels taken down till now were those allegedly glorifying Sirajuddin alias Buldu and Sameer, both from Suddaguntepalya, who have 12 and 21 criminal cases registered against them, respectively. Besides, the fan pages of Sunil alias Silent Sunil, a rowdy-sheeter from Amruthahalli, Bengaluru, who is facing around 20-21 criminal cases, have also been taken down. "The individuals themselves often do not directly operate these accounts because many are facing criminal cases. However, their associates and supporters run fan pages on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, where they celebrate these rowdy sheeters, upload videos from birthday events, rallies, and gatherings, and project them as influential figures," a senior police officer said. Following verifica-

tion, police officers from the Organised Crime Wing (OCW) of the Bengaluru police's Central Crime Branch (CCB) wrote to the respective companies seeking the removal of objectionable content and, in many cases, the suspension or deletion of entire accounts. Investigators said the crackdown was initiated after the police observed a growing trend of gangsters using social media to build influence, networks, and cultivate an image of power among youngsters. "The majority of followers we are seeing belong to the 18-22 age group. Many of them are still in a stage where their decision-making abilities are developing. They are highly impressionable and are being influenced by content that glorifies criminal behaviour," the officer said.

According to officers, some youngsters have been found actively engaging with these accounts, sharing content, participating in fan groups, and attending events organised by supporters of 'rowdy sheeters'. In such cases, the police have begun counselling those involved and contacting their families. "Wherever required, we are questioning individuals, issuing warnings, and speaking to parents," an officer added. Earlier drives usually led to the removal of a few dozen to a few hundred accounts, along with the deletion of related posts and videos. Officers said the current monitoring effort is much larger in scale and stricter in action.

Why Gurgaon's Khandsa waste site keeps catching fire

Just days after a blaze took more than 200 fire tenders and four days to extinguish, the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's (MCG) secondary waste dumping point at Khandsa in Sector 37 caught fire once again on Wednesday night. Residents and citizen groups have hit out at the recurring public health hazard, with citizen collective Citizens For Clean Air Bharat terming the latest blaze a "failure of accountability" and alleging a complete absence of civic preparedness. A resident living near Khandsa, speaking on condition of anonymity, alleged that the problem is not weather-related but linked to those seeking to profit from waste sales.

The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's (MCG) secondary waste dumping point at Khandsa caught fire on Wednesday night. (Express Photo) The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram's (MCG) secondary waste dumping point at Khandsa caught fire on Wednesday night. They burn the industrial waste, then put water on it and load it for sale. When it burns, illegal dumping also continues at the site. When it burns, nearby residents suffer and develop ailments. Fire vehicles were damaged trying to reach the site. The area gets filled with dense black smoke. Overnight, two tenders were deployed at the site, and four more arrived today," the resident claimed. The citizen group pointed out that residents and firefighters are being repeatedly exposed to toxic, carcinogenic smoke: "The MCG waste collection secondary dumping point at Khandsa Sector 37 is on fire once more... just days after residents were already exposed to severe toxic smoke and burning waste for the past 5 days." An official from the Sector 37 fire station said the fire was doused by 11 am Thursday.

When contacted, Municipal Commissioner Pradeep Dahiya said that a fire tender and a long-range sprinkler (with hose pipes) have now been stationed at the site permanently. "We will install high-mast lights and CCTVs also." The Municipal Commissioner and Additional Com-

missioners had inspected the site in the morning and ordered for these arrangements. 'Business as usual', allege residents

Gurgaon resident and founder-member of citizen group Why Waste your Waste, Ruchika Sethi Takkar, said operations at the site seemed like "business as usual", with machines continuing to load burnt, water-soaked waste onto trucks. Observing "no visible sense of urgency" to arrest the hazard, she pointed out that the MCG has failed to curb the carcinogenic smoke adding to Delhi-NCR's emission load. Citizen collectives have written to the MCG, the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB), and other authorities seeking clarity on the site's waste composition, emissions, monitoring, and prevention systems. They also raised serious concerns over the lack of health advisories or evacuation guidance for nearby Khandsa villagers and shopkeepers when the initial fire began. The groups also reiterated long-standing questions regarding industrial waste management at the site and whether prior warnings were acted upon by officials. Expressing frustration over the toll on the public, the collectives highlighted that environmental fines and compensation levied on the MCG are ultimately paid from taxpayer money. Residents, they noted, are penalised multiple times: first through taxes, again through public money used for penalties stemming from mismanagement, and finally through the severe health impacts of exposure to toxic smoke, landfill leachate, and microplastics.

Despite the severe health hazards, older internal communications accessed by The Indian Express show alleged inaction by ground-level officials. On November 4, 2024, following media reports of fires at the site, the Joint Commissioner-I issued a 'Most Urgent' memo directing the Senior Sanitary Inspector of Zone-I to ensure strict prohibition on burning garbage and to conduct immediate inspections.

Karnataka schools forum seeks clarity on new CBSE three-language policy rules

Hours after CBSE issued fresh guidelines on implementing its three-language policy, a Karnataka school forum said Monday that the clarification failed to resolve a key conflict between the Board's mandate and the state's law requiring Kannada to be taught as the first or second language. The Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka, also known as KAMS, noted that, under the Kannada Language Learning Rules, 2017, students already study Kannada as either their first or second language. KAMS said the CBSE guidelines do not clarify how such students are expected to comply with the third-language requirement. D Shashi Kumar, General Secretary, Associated Managements of Primary and Secondary Schools in KAMS, said their apprehen-

sions largely remained unaddressed. "The confusion still prevails. CBSE releases guidelines nationwide, but it needs to consider policies that states have adopted," he added. The CBSE issued guidelines over a month ago, stating that studying three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1. Since then, several students and parents have approached the court against the CBSE order. KAMS, a private body which represents over 5,000 unaided English schools in Karnataka, has written to the CBSE chairperson seeking clarity over its three-language policy rules. "Students and parents continue to seek clarification from schools, which schools themselves are unable to provide in the absence of an

Mamata Banerjee stood by me, won't leave in her difficult time: Shatrughan Sinha

Actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha Thursday said he would remain with the Trinamool Congress and continue to support party chief Mamata Banerjee despite recent turbulence from the party. Earlier, speculation rose around Shatrughan Sinha's move, but what set the ball rolling? Sinha's assertion came after his name featured in a purported list of rebel TMC MPs circulating online. The former Union minister, who has been with the BJP in past, also posted on X on congratulating PM Modi on completing 12 years in office. Responding to the buzz, Sinha, in an interview with news agency PTI said he would not leave Banerjee at a time when the party faces challenges. Over the past few days, resignations by senior party leaders, emergence of rebel camps, and fresh organisational challenges have raised questions about the party's internal cohesion. "Won't change my path"

"I will not leave Mamata Banerjee in her difficult time. She stood by me when I was facing a tough time after losing the election in Patna," Sinha told PTI. "I am issuing a three-line whip to myself — I was with the TMC and Mamata ji, I am with the TMC and Mamata ji, and I will stay with the TMC and Mamata ji. I have no intention of going anywhere," he said. A three-line whip is usually

Mallikarjun Kharge, Pawan Khera, M Nagaraj elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Karnataka

Karnataka Rajya Sabha elections Secondary Key-words: Mallikarjun Kharge Rajya Sabha, Pawan Khera elected Rajya Sabha, Mansoor Ali Khan Rajya Sabha, M Nagaraj BJP candidate, Karnataka RS poll results, indian express news Mallikarjun Kharge's term was supposed to end this month. However, the Congress decided to renominate him to the Upper House. All four candidates fielded by the Congress and the BJP for the Rajya Sabha seats from Karnataka were elected unopposed Thursday.

The Congress nominees were AICC president and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge; AICC media and publicity department chairperson, Pawan Khera; and AICC secretary, Mansoor Ali Khan. The BJP's pick for the biennial election was Prof M Nagaraj. Kharge's term was also supposed to end this month. However, the party decided to renominate him to the Upper House.

Polls for the four seats, which are elected by state MLAs, were scheduled for June 18. However, since there were no other contenders, the four candidates were declared as winners. Elections for the seats were necessi-

'North Bengal highly important': Swapan Dasgupta in Siliguri for pre-budget outreach

Ahead of the new West Bengal government's first budget, newly appointed Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta arrived in North Bengal on Thursday morning for crucial pre-budget consultations with local stakeholders. "North Bengal has been deprived for a long time. But North Bengal is highly important to the BJP government. Ahead of the state budget, we are interacting with people in various places to look into what their expectations are," Dasgupta told reporters at Bagdogra Airport, where he arrived accompanied by a delegation including the secretary and other top bureaucrats of the finance department.

"The purpose of the visit is to elicit views of all the important stakeholders in North Bengal on the forthcoming state budget—to see what exactly they have in mind, what are the demands, what are the problems, and to

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The Bengaluru police have identified and sought the removal of nearly 1,500 social media accounts and over 1,000 reels and URLs across multiple platforms in the last five months to curb the online glorification of criminals. According to senior police officers, the accounts regularly post reels, videos, photographs, and other content glorifying 'rowdy sheeters' and gangsters, often portraying them as local celebrities and role models. Much of the content included birthday celebrations, rallies, fan gatherings, and tribute posts created by associates and supporters of known offenders. Among the social media accounts and reels taken down till now were those allegedly glorifying Sirajuddin alias Buldu and Sameer, both from Suddaguntepalya, who have 12 and 21 criminal cases registered against them, respectively. Besides, the fan pages of Sunil alias Silent Sunil, a rowdy-sheeter from Amruthahalli, Bengaluru, who is facing around 20-21 criminal cases, have also been taken down. "The individuals themselves often do not directly operate these accounts because many are facing criminal cases. However, their associates and supporters run fan pages on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, where they celebrate these rowdy sheeters, upload videos from birthday events, rallies, and gatherings, and project them as influential figures," a senior police officer said. Following verification, police officers from the

issued by parties before voting on important issues in Parliament. Sinha said some leaders may have left the party due to "compulsions, fears or allurements" but added that he would remain with the TMC. "I am grateful to those who invited me to join the TMC rebel group, but my principled stand is I should stand by Mamata Banerjee now. As of now, I won't change my path," he said. Sinha had posted on X: "In true sportsman spirit, wishing our friend & guide of society/nation hon'ble PM Modi best wishes on completing 12 years in office, perhaps the longest tenure, ever. Wish you a long, healthy & prosperous life ahead." This post triggered speculation about his next political move. Sinha said Banerjee remains a "street fighter" and pointed to the party's 41 per cent vote share in the recent West Bengal Assembly election. The remarks come amid a split in the TMC's legislature party and among its MPs following the Assembly election defeat. Sinha began his political career with the BJP and served as a Union minister. He left the party ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election and contested from Patna Sahib on a Congress ticket, but lost to the BJP. He joined the Trinamool Congress in 2022 and won the Asansol Lok Sabha bypoll. He retained the seat in the 2024 Lok Sabha election as a TMC candidate.

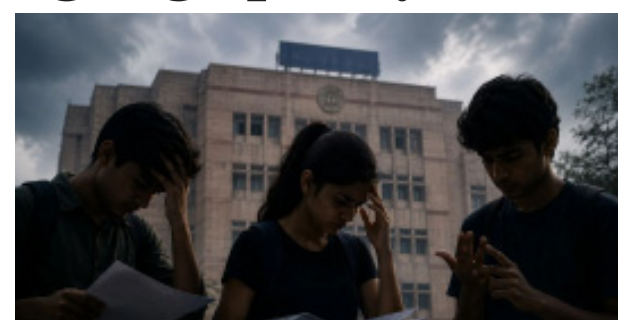
tated by the expiry of the terms of four Rajya Sabha MPs by June 25. Among those who retired are former prime minister and JD(S) leader H D Deve Gowda and BJP MPs Iranna Kadadi and Narayana Koragappa.

Following their win, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar congratulated the party's winning candidates. "Heartiest Congratulations to Shri Mallikarjun Kharge, Shri Pawan Khera, and Shri Mansoor Ali Khan on being elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Karnataka. I am confident that they will champion Karnataka's interests in Parliament, effectively voicing the aspirations of our people and working towards the state's continued progress and development," he wrote in a post on X. Speaking to reporters, Congress's Khera and Khan thanked the party leadership for picking them as candidates for the polls. Nagaraj also thanked the BJP's national leadership for his election. On reports that his candidature was not referred by the state unit to the high command, he said that he had petitioned the party leadership for a Rajya Sabha berth in the past, too. Ahead of finalising the candidate for the 2026 Rajya Sabha poll, Nagaraj said he had met the state BJP core committee members in person and submitted petitions.

see how much we can try and meet some of their expectations. It's purely for that purpose. It's a very short visit, and it has a single purpose: a pre-budget consultation," he said. Acknowledging that the state faces several fiscal and developmental challenges, the finance minister stressed the importance of firsthand communication. "There are a lot of challenges, I can tell you. But it's best when the various stakeholders tell us what exactly the problems are," he said. Dasgupta, who assumed office on Wednesday, clarified that the trip was strictly administrative and focused on the budget. "This is my very first visit to North Bengal, and I have come to Siliguri. Let me speak with the people and see..." he said. "No other political matters right now." Political and administrative circles view this outreach and the presence of top finance officials in Siliguri as a highly significant move by the new government to address regional imbalances.

Organised Crime Wing (OCW) of the Bengaluru police's Central Crime Branch (CCB) wrote to the respective companies seeking the removal of objectionable content and, in many cases, the suspension or deletion of entire accounts. Investigators said the crackdown was initiated after the police observed a growing trend of gangsters using social media to build influence, networks, and cultivate an image of power among youngsters. "The majority of followers we are seeing belong to the 18-22 age group. Many of them are still in a stage where their decision-making abilities are developing. They are highly impressionable and are being influenced by content that glorifies criminal behaviour," the officer said.

According to officers, some youngsters have been found actively engaging with these accounts, sharing content, participating in fan groups, and attending events organised by supporters of 'rowdy sheeters'. In such cases, the police have begun counselling those involved and contacting their families. "Wherever required, we are questioning individuals, issuing warnings, and speaking to parents," an officer added. Earlier drives usually led to the removal of a few dozen to a few hundred accounts, along with the deletion of related posts and videos. Officers said the current monitoring effort is much larger in scale and stricter in action.



Examinations have already been planned. A sudden implementation midway through the academic year would seriously prejudice students

official clarification from CBSE," the letter said Saturday. It said educational reforms cannot be implemented without adequate academic preparedness, adding that there is uncertainty over prescribed textbooks, their availability, language combinations, and examination methodology. The CBSE circular, it added, does not clarify how interstate migrant students are expected to comply in cases where Kannada is also being introduced as an additional compulsory language. Students admitted for the present academic year have already opted for their language combinations. Parents have completed admissions relying upon the approved curriculum. Schools have prepared timetables. Teachers have already been appointed. Textbooks have already been purchased.

Bangladesh halts construction of massive Lord Ram statue amid alleged extremist pressure

Dhaka: Bangladesh authorities have ordered the suspension of the construction of the world's largest statue of Lord Ram at the Sri Sri Radha Govinda and Kali Temple in Palashbari upazila of Gaibandha district, according to local media reports. The announcement was made by temple advisor Shyamal Kumar Mahant during a press conference held at the temple auditorium on Thursday evening, Bangladesh media reported. The decision has sparked strong reactions, with critics alleging that the suspension came under pressure from Islamist groups opposed to the project.

Exiled Bangladeshi author and human rights activist Taslima Nasreen strongly condemned the threats, incitement, and hostile rhetoric surrounding the construction of the Ram temple, questioning why a single Hindu place of worship is being targeted in a country where several hundred thousand mosques exist and continue to be built.

Taking to her social media platform X, Nasreen said: "There are several hundred thousand mosques in Bangladesh, and new mosques continue to be built across the country. So why is there so much opposition to the construction of a single Ram temple or a statue of Lord Rama? If religious freedom is truly for everyone, then it should apply equally to minorities, not only to the

majority." "The threats, incitement, and hateful rhetoric directed against the Ram temple currently under construction in Palashbari, Gaibandha, are deeply concerning. No individual or group acquires the right to demolish another community's place of worship simply because they dislike it. In a state governed by the rule of law, religious disagreements are not resolved through violence or barbarism," she added. Nasreen stressed that the situation is particularly troubling given Palashbari's history of attacks on Hindu temples and idol vandalism, which has left the Hindi minority community feeling vulnerable. "Many Muslim-majority countries around the world—including Indonesia, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Oman—have large Hindu temples. In those countries, the existence of temples is not viewed as a threat to the state. Why, then, is the construction of a single temple in Bangladesh being portrayed by some Muslims as an existential crisis?" Nasreen questioned. Meanwhile, Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, editor of the Bangladeshi newspaper 'Blitz' also expressed grave concern over the halt of temple construction amid pressure from Islamist extremist groups. "Amid massive protests of local jihadist and Islamist groups, authorities of the ongoing Sanatan Complex in Gaibandha district in Bangladesh have announced suspending all activities and stop building the idol of Lord Ram," Choudhury posted on X.

India summons US envoy again over strikes on ships with Indian crew

New Delhi: For the second time this week, India on Friday summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks and lodged a strong protest over the American Navy's strikes on three commercial vessels with Indian crew members off the coast of Oman. Meeks was called to the Ministry of External Affairs headquarters, a day after the government said three Indian crew members of a tanker were killed in the US action.

The US charge d'affaires was summoned, and he was conveyed India's strong protest over the US military's action. Meeks had also been summoned on Wednesday night. India on Thursday said three merchant ships with Indian crew members came under attack from American military off the coast of Oman this week, resulting in the death of three nationals. It was New Delhi's first public acknowledgement that the US Navy targeted the three ships with Indian crew members. New Delhi asserted

that these attacks must stop.

A Palau-flagged oil tanker, Marivex, carrying 24 Indian seafarers, was disabled by US forces on June 8. All crew members were safely rescued. On June 10, the US struck another Palau-flagged tanker, Settebello, killing three out of the 24 Indian sailors on board. Another vessel, Jalveer, a Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker with 20 Indians, was attacked on Thursday. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Thursday that the three separate strikes on the Settebello, Marivex, and Jalveer "came from the US Navy". Jaiswal said two of the three vessels were subject to sanctions administered by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), while another had been classified as non-compliant. The OFAC is the financial intelligence and enforcement agency of the US Treasury Department, and it acts against vessels involved in violating US sanctions on the sale of Iranian and Russian oil.

Finnish President hails India's growing global influence in talks with EAM Jaishankar

Helsinki: Finnish President Alexander Stubb described India as an "influential actor" on the global stage and underscored the importance of hearing New Delhi's perspective during a meeting with External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the Kultaranta Talks in Helsinki. Following the meeting, Stubb took to X and posted, "We met today at Kultaranta with India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. We discussed the situation in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, efforts to end Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and the upcoming G7 summit. India is an influential actor whose views are important to hear."

The two leaders exchanged perspectives on the evolving geopolitical situation and underscored the importance of diplomacy in navigating an increasingly uncertain global environment. Sharing the details of the meeting, EAM took to X and said, "Pleased to meet President Alexander Stubb of Finland on the sidelines of the Kultaranta Talks. We exchanged views on the evolving geopolitical situation and underscored the importance of diplomacy in navigating an increasingly uncertain global

environment." "India and Finland remain committed to advancing our Strategic Partnership in Digitalization and Sustainability while strengthening coordination in multilateral fora on issues of shared interest," he added. EAM participated in a discussion with Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen and Foreign Minister of State Lana Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 'Emerging Powers and the New Geopolitical Competition' at the Kultaranta Talks. During the discussions, EAM Jaishankar noted that ongoing conflicts are imposing costs and triggering changes far beyond the regions and agreed that the international community must continue efforts to mitigate their consequences and create conditions for diplomacy. He emphasised the importance of de-risking and diversifying supply chains to build greater resilience and redundancy in an increasingly volatile world. The EAM also reiterated that India's energy choices are guided by the national interest, with purchases based on affordability and availability. He highlighted the centrality of India's relations with the Gulf region, underpinned by strong people-to-people ties, energy cooperation, and a growing strategic and defence partnership.

Bangladesh clinch historic ODI series win over Australia

MIRPUR (BANGLADESH): Bangladesh secured its first-ever One-Day International (ODI) series victory over Australia on Thursday. A 2½-hour rain delay forced a revised DLS target of 192 in 41 overs, and Bangladesh reached 195 for five with six overs to spare to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

"It's an amazing feeling," batter Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "The way we played this series, we showed a lot of courage. We have been working really hard over the last few months, and we wanted to improve our game. I'm really proud to be part of this team." The depleted Australians began the match by losing three wickets without a run on the board. Half-centuries from Marnus Labuschagne (55 not out) and Xavier Bartlett (52) helped them recover to 187 for eight in 42 overs. Opening batter Soumya Sarkar, the only change Bangladesh made from the team that won the first game by 86 runs, and Shanto scored 42 runs each, while Towhid Hridoy remained unbeaten on 40 off 55 balls.

Shanto had a nervy start but steadied the chase with an 86-run partnership with Sarkar. However, he edged Riley Meredith behind to give the fast bowler his first ODI wicket in five years following his recall. Bangladesh

wobbled at 144 for five in the 27th over, but Hridoy and captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz shared an unbeaten 51-run stand to secure the historic series result. "Bangladesh have outplayed us so far in this series, so congratulations to them," Australia captain Josh Inglis said. Shortly before the end, Mehidy took a blow to the helmet from a Nathan Ellis delivery and dropped to his knees before vomiting. He declined a stretcher and was allowed to continue. Mehidy then hit the winning runs with a six over fine leg. Shanto later said that Mehidy was taken to hospital for observation.

Australia opted to bat first, but Matthew Short registered his third consecutive duck in ODIs. He was followed by Cooper Connolly and Matt Renshaw, who were also dismissed without scoring. It was only the fourth time in ODI history that a team had slumped to 0 for 3. Left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (3-27) and Taskin Ahmed (3-33) shared six wickets between them, while Mustafizur also accounted for Alex Carey, who was caught at point. When Inglis holed out to deep cover, Australia had lost half their side for 68 runs. Labuschagne, batting at No. 7, and Bartlett revived the innings with a 103-run partnership. Labuschagne's first ODI fifty in 14 innings came after he survived a run-out chance on one when Tanvir Islam missed the stumps.

try deportees from the U.S. — did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Both the women were detained upon arriving in the U.S. in November 2024, Trostle said. They applied for asylum in the U.S. and had secured a form of protection known as withholding of removal from a U.S. immigration judge, Trostle said. Obtaining that protection meant judges found they faced a risk greater than 50% of being persecuted or tortured in Iran. The official briefed on the matter told Reuters the first flight to Central African Republic under the deal was expected to take about 20 people, also including Syrians and Afghans.

Ukraine hits fuel supplies to Crimea, sparking fuel crisis on Russian-held peninsula

Kyiv: Ukrainian drone strikes on refineries, depots and pipelines. Tanker trucks attacked and left ablaze along the land corridor from Russia to Crimea. Motorists waiting in long lines at gas stations. In a new blow to the Kremlin's narrative that Moscow is winning the 4-year-old war in Ukraine, Kyiv's forces have targeted supplies to Crimea, triggering the worst fuel crisis on the Black Sea peninsula since it was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

The persistent attacks reflect the growing intensity and efficiency of Ukraine's drone strikes and have caught Russia off-guard and struggling for a response. As the country marks the Russia Day national holiday on Friday, signalling the start of summer vacations, the gas shortages are threatening to cause further disruptions to the tourism-dependent region with its beaches and resorts. In a rare public acknowledgment, the Kremlin has recognized the scope of the problem and promised to address the issue quickly. Ukraine's successes have highlighted its ability to inflict painful damage to Russia and change the course of the conflict while Moscow's advances recently have ground to a near halt. On Thursday, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine reached its 1,569th day, surpassing the duration of World War I. Crimea has been a jewel in Russia's imperial crown since it was seized from Turkic-speaking Tatars in the 18th century after Moscow defeated the Ottoman Empire.

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1954 when both republics were part of the USSR. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the diamond-shaped peninsula became part of newly independent Ukraine. Russia kept a naval base in Sevastopol, and when a Moscow-friendly Ukrainian president was ousted by a popular uprising in February 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent in troops to overtake Crimea. Weeks later, Moscow annexed the peninsula following a referendum that most of the world refuses to recognise.

Soon afterward, a Moscow-backed separatist insurgency erupted in eastern Ukraine, and fighting there raged with varying intensity until the February 2022 invasion. Russian troops concentrated in Crimea quickly seized large parts of southern Ukraine early in the war and secured the land route to the peninsula. Since early in the war, Ukraine has fired missiles and drones to try to dislodge Moscow's hold on the territory. The Ukrainian military sank several Russian warships in the Black Sea and at their Crimean bases, crippling Moscow's naval capability and forcing it to redeploy its fleet to Novorossiysk.

Ukraine also methodically targeted munitions depots, airfields and Putin's prized asset, the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia. The span was struck by a truck bomb in October 2022 that killed five people, blew up two sections of the bridge and required months of repairs. More attacks on the bridge followed in 2023 and 2025. Ukraine's attacks on the land corridor to Crimea since the Kerch Bridge attacks, Russia has channelled most fuel and other supplies along the highway and railroad via the occupied territories along the Sea of Azov coast. Those shipments were interrupted last month, when Ukrainian drones hit fuel trucks on the highway that Moscow once deemed to be safe, leaving behind dozens of burning vehicles.

Other relentless Ukrainian strikes hit refineries, oil depots and pipelines deep inside Russia, hurting its oil exports and causing domestic fuel shortages. The Wash-

ington-based Institute for the Study of War noted the synergy between the longer-range attacks and those disrupting supplies to Crimea and other occupied regions. "The long-range strike campaign is therefore reducing Russia's production capacity, while the mid-range strike campaign is hurting Russia's ability to transport the gasoline Russia is still able to produce," it said in an analysis. Making matters worse, Ukrainian drones this week repeatedly hit the Chonhar Bridge, which links mainland Ukraine and Crimea over a shallow strait. Authorities deployed pontoon bridges. The Ukrainian military said it struck the bridge to disrupt movement of troops, ammunition and fuel from Crimea.

It's not immediately clear how the fuel disruptions will affect Russian military operations, but residents of Crimea and other occupied territories are keenly feeling the blow. The peninsula has had periodic fuel shortages from Ukrainian strikes before, but this crisis is the worst since its 2014 annexation. At the end of May, authorities restricted the sale of gasoline to 20 litres (5 1/3 gallons) per vehicle owner per week using prepaid coupons. Those were snapped up immediately following their release on an official messaging app channel, and motorists lined up for hours, waiting to refuel.

Social networks have been abuzz with requests and advice on where to find fuel, and authorities launched a hotline for tourists who have found themselves trapped. While fuel shipments over the Kerch Bridge long has been suspended for security reasons since the Ukrainian attacks, fuel also has been carried by ferries. Those shipments are expected to increase. Some motorists bring their own gas over the bridge from the mainland, but they are restricted to carrying 100 liters (about 26 1/2 gallons) per vehicle. Some speculators are selling gas at double the market price.

Crimea attracted nearly 7 million tourists last year, and it had hoped to top that number this year. The business daily Kommersant reported that nearly 80% of hotel bookings were cancelled in late May and early June. Some hotels offered gasoline as a bonus for new bookings, offers that were quickly snapped up.

Some travellers were unsettled by a Ukrainian drone attack earlier this week on a passenger train traveling from Moscow to Crimea, injuring its driver and killing his assistant. That led to a brief suspension of service, with passengers taken by buses. An earlier attack on a commuter train in Crimea killed one person and injured three others, forcing authorities to shift schedules to limit service during daytime hours. Kremlin pledges action Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged the Crimean fuel shortages earlier this week and promised that "measures were being taken" to deal with them. The Russian Defense Ministry has been silent about the Ukrainian attacks on the land corridor, while some war bloggers have harshly criticized the military for failing to anticipate the strikes and its slow response. Some suggested military escorts for fuel trucks while others urged stepping up strikes on Ukrainian bridges, fuel storage sites and other infrastructure. Amid the fuel crisis and the finger-pointing, Ukraine dealt another symbolic blow to Russia, striking a historic Sevastopol building that houses a huge panoramic painting that depicts the defense of the city during the 19th century Crimean War. The painting was effectively destroyed by fire during the attack, according to Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Kremlin-appointed head of Crimea's largest city. Given Putin's focus on Crimea,

UN maritime chief condemns US strike that killed Indian sailors in Gulf of Oman

4United Nations: International Maritime Organisation's (IMO) Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez has condemned the US attack on a tanker in which three Indian crew members were killed. The UN agency, IMO, is monitoring the situation closely and calls for a full and transparent investigation into the incident involving the tanker Settebello, he said in a statement. "I strongly condemn any act from any party that endangers the lives of seafarers and the safety of international shipping," he said. "This is simply unacceptable".

"My thoughts are with the families of the three seafarers who lost their lives and with all those awaiting news of the crew members", he added. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has confirmed that 21 Indian sailors were rescued from the ship and three were killed.

Accusing the Setebello of transporting of transporting oil from Iran, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said that its aircraft "fired precision munitions into the ship's engine" as it transited the Gulf of Oman on Tuesday. IMO had said the attack on Setebello "resulted in a fire on board and three seafarers reported missing". The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations agency, which monitors shipping safety placed the at-

tack about 20 nautical miles northeast of the Omani port of Sohar. The CENTCOM released a video of the attack on X and said it was the second ship it "disabled" this week accusing them of violating the US blockade of Iranian ports. The other tanker is the Marivex, which is also registered in Palau, a tiny island nation in the Western Pacific Ocean, and had an India crew. Dominguez said, "All actions affecting international shipping must fully respect international law and the safety of life at sea. The protection of seafarers is a shared responsibility that must remain paramount". India called in the US Embassy's Charge d'Affaires Jason Meeks to the Ministry of External Affairs where Additional Secretary Nagaraj Naidu, who is in charge of the Americas, conveyed India's protest over the attack. The ministry said earlier in a statement, "The targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end". It was not known from where the Montebello was sailing or its destination. Myshipfinder, one of the sites monitoring shipping, said Montebello was last recorded in May heading to Khorfakkan in the United Arab Emirates and that it was out of coverage.

Haryana and Rajasthan sign Yamuna Water Project agreement in Amit Shah's presence

New Delhi: Haryana and Rajasthan on Monday signed an agreement in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the construction and implementation of the Yamuna Water Project, officials said. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed on May 12, 1994, by the Yamuna basin states — Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and the National Capital Territory of Delhi — regarding the allocation of the surface flow of the river. After its creation in 2000, Uttarakhand was also included in the MoU.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil and senior officials from the central government and the state governments were present during the ceremony. Addressing the meeting, Shah said the project seeks to facilitate the conveyance of Rajasthan's allocated share of Yamuna waters through an underground pipeline system from the Western Yamuna Canal, enabling the state to effectively utilise the water allocated to it under the 1994 MoU on the sharing of utilisable surface waters of the Upper Yamuna Basin. The agreement will ensure that 580 Million Cubic Metres (MCM) of water is supplied from the Yamuna Canal to Rajasthan through three underground pipelines from July to October, he said.

Shah said the agreement has resolved the nearly

three-decade-old water-related problem faced by the people of Haryana and Rajasthan. The home minister said the agreement is an excellent example of the mantra, 'Solution through Dialogue', given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "This agreement demonstrates that if states move forward with the spirit of cooperative federalism, even a problem persisting for three decades can be resolved easily," he said. Shah said that under the agreement, approximately 580 Million Cubic Metres (MCM) of water will be supplied from the Yamuna Canal to Rajasthan through three underground pipelines from July to October. These three pipelines have a diameter of more than 3.6 metres and will provide drinking water to the people of both Rajasthan and Haryana.

Shah said the agreement is an excellent example of a "win-win situation" for both states. The agreement has carefully addressed financial responsibilities, cost-sharing, water allocation, water release protocols and maintenance arrangements, he said. This scientifically comprehensive agreement also incorporates the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, monitoring systems, transparency measures and a robust dispute resolution mechanism, the home minister said. He said the framework of the agreement, prepared by Haryana, Rajasthan and especially the Central Water Commission (CWC), will remain a dispute-free arrangement for many decades to come.

EYE SECRETS
Editorial

Ram temple theft is a betrayal of faith

Corruption in the management of revered religious institutions is bound to weaken the moral authority of those who seek to speak in religion's name. This is precisely the question facing the BJP leadership in the wake of allegations of misappropriation of donations made to the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The saffron party, whose rise in national politics is largely due to mobilisation around the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, owes an explanation to the people of the country about the theft and pilferage of temple funds. Many believe that any misuse of offerings made in devotion would represent not merely financial misconduct but a profound betrayal of public trust. Temples survive on faith, and faith survives on integrity. If devotees begin questioning whether their offerings reach the deity or disappear into private hands, rebuilding confidence may prove far more difficult than constructing even the grandest shrine. Ayodhya is no ordinary temple;

it is the culmination of one of independent India's longest religious, political and legal battles. Millions of Hindus believe it to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, revered as Maryada Purushottam—the embodiment of righteousness and ethical conduct. Now, the very temple that forms the core of BJP's Hindutva politics is embroiled in a bitter controversy following the disappearance of Lord Ram's ornaments. The embarrassing allegations could not have come at a more inopportune time for the BJP government as Assembly elections are due in Uttar Pradesh early next year. It has ordered a probe by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to ferret out facts.

At stake is not only the integrity of a prestigious religious institution, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, but also the faith of crores of devotees who have contributed generously to the landmark temple. It is alleged that cash donations amounting to several crore rupees were siphoned off and precious ornaments were replaced with fake items. The SIT must find satisfactory answers to key questions on whether transparent procedures were followed for cataloguing donations, maintaining inventory, safeguarding valuables as per security protocols and maintenance of digital records. Investigators are expected to examine donation registers, CCTV footage, digital inventories, treasury records and records relating to the movement of valuables from the time they were received. Opposition parties have demanded complete disclosure of donations, inventories and audit reports. The culprits, irrespective of their position, influence or status, must be identified and given exemplary punishment. There is an urgent need to create a foolproof system for the collection and documentation of donations, whether cash or in kind. Periodic audits, transparency and accountability must become mandatory in big religious institutions. For a temple built to symbolise the triumph of faith after generations of struggle, nothing could be more important than ensuring that every ornament offered to Lord Ram remains exactly where millions of devotees intended it to be.

Few visitors at accused's Pune house, was rarely seen: Neighbours



Security guards at Konark Society in Pune's Viman Nagar stated that terror suspect Faiyaz Premji was rarely seen at the largely unoccupied flat, with his father visiting only occasionally. Security guards at Konark Society in Pune's Viman Nagar stated that terror suspect Faiyaz Premji was rarely seen at the largely unoccupied flat, with his father visiting only occasionally. The row house in Pune's Viman Nagar area, where the accused in the alleged mass-poisoning attempt at the Mumbai Muharram procession lived, remained locked for the past three days, according to security guards at the gated society. Faiyaz Premji, 39, a BBA graduate, was arrested in Mumbai on Saturday for allegedly distributing capsules laced with zinc phosphide, a rodenticide commonly used as rat poison, during a Muharram procession in south Mumbai on Friday night.

At Konark Society Phase 1 in Pune's Viman Nagar, guards told The Indian Express that while Premji's father was occasionally seen at the property, roughly once every five to ten days, Faiyaz himself was rarely spotted. "People here knew very little about the family as the flat was largely unoccupied," a guard said. No regular visitors were reported, though food deliveries would sometimes arrive when the father was present. The guards said they were unaware of any other deliveries or suspicious activity. According to police, Premji's father owns a paint company in Pune.

Drug Mafia More Dangerous Than Terrorists; Telangana Aims to Be Drug-Free by 2029: DGP C.V. Anand



"Bhadradi Kothagudem | July 6: Telangana Director General of Police C.V. Anand has announced a stringent crackdown on the drug mafia, stating that narcotics networks pose a greater threat to society than terrorists. He reaffirmed the state's commitment to making Telangana completely drug-free by December 2029 through strict enforcement and coordinated policing. "During a district crime review meeting at the Bhadradi Kothagudem Police Headquarters, the DGP directed officials to strengthen surveillance along border areas to prevent the district from becoming a transit route for cannabis and other narcotics. "Superintendent of Police Rohith Raj presented the district's crime statistics, anti-drug operations, cybercrime, women's safety measures, road safety initiatives, Naxalite surrenders, and investigation progress. He said the district has 1,926 personnel against a sanctioned strength of 2,296, leaving 365 vacancies. Between 2023 and May 2026, police registered 5,632 criminal cases and achieved an 84.6 per-



cent detection rate in theft cases. "The SP also stated that 899 Maoists have surrendered since 2014. Till May this year, police registered 27 ganja cases and seized 1,275 kilograms of cannabis. "The DGP instructed police officers to take personal responsibility for protecting youth from drug abuse and ordered intensified anti-drug operations across villages and towns. He called for increased checks at bus stations, railway stations, and checkpoints with the assistance of dog squads, adding that drug supply networks would be tracked and dismantled wherever they operate, both within India and abroad. "He further directed officials to prioritize road safety, cybercrime prevention, and women's security while expediting investigations and filing charge sheets on time

to improve conviction rates. He also stressed the importance of maintaining complete records in the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) to strengthen investigations. "Warning against corruption, C.V. Anand said there would be zero tolerance for misconduct and urged police personnel to maintain integrity, transparency, and discipline, cautioning that corruption cases could damage both careers and families. "The DGP appreciated the performance of the Bhadradi Kothagudem Police and encouraged them to continue serving the public with dedication. The meeting was attended by Multi Zone-1 IG Chandrasekhar Reddy, EAGLE SP Giridhar, district police officers, SHOs, SIs, and other officials.

Gen Z not tukde-tukde mindset or anti-establishment: BJP chief Nitin Nabin



BJP national president Nitin Nabin has said that "some opposition forces want to incite youth by copying Gen-Z movements from other countries". Nabin, who was speaking at the Viksit Bharat Students Conclave held in an educational institution in Hyderabad on Monday, told students, "No one is asking what Gen Z really wants. Today, some opposition forces want to incite the youth by copying so-called Gen Z movements from other countries. But Indian youth are not anti-establishment. Indian youth do not believe in anarchy. They believe in nation building". "Gen Z is not the tukde-tukde mindset. Real Gen Z is the youth sitting here – young Indians who are contributing to the growth, innovation and future of Bharat," he said, adding that governments may come and go, but the bigger question is in which direction should the country move.

Without referring to any particular party or outfit, Nabin said, "Those who are trying to incite the youth must understand that Indian youth will never allow foreign forces or negative agendas to dictate India's future." As an example, he said, "Earlier, the image of Kashmir youth was linked to stone pelting. But in the Modi era, the youth of Kashmir are moving forward in education, sports and national service. Today, Kashmir's youth are winning on the cricket field, competing in Ranji, and making the nation proud. "The real Gen Z," he said, "is not the stone pelt, but the nation builder." During the same conference earlier, he said that India's demographic dividend is "our biggest strength". "Through initiatives like Start-Up India and many other schemes, Modiji has created opportunities to integrate the youth into the journey of building a developed India," Nabin said, adding that the youth must have faith in themselves. "They must work hard, remain focused and believe that they are not just beneficiaries of India's growth but active builders of Bharat's future." Asked why young people should vote for the BJP, he said that young first-time voters should do so because "our ideology is clear, our policies are clear, and our intention is clear. Our ideology is nation first". Referring to the Congress-led times before 2014, Nabin said that "there was a sense of depression and uncertainty among the youth". "Everywhere they looked, they saw negativity – terror attacks, corruption, policy paralysis and a lack of direction," he said, adding that the Narendra Modi government has shown that when the leadership is strong, change is possible.

Bengaluru double-decker corridor will see more cars, fewer metro riders: Study



A technical assessment conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) on integrating elevated road infrastructure with Bengaluru Metro's Phase-3 corridors has suggested that it would bring more private vehicles on the road and reduce metro ridership. In an interactive session held on Sunday by the Citizens Voluntary Initiative for the City (CIVIC), Bengaluru, and Bengaluru Praja Vedike in view of the Union government considering approval for Namma Metro's phase 3, Prof Ashish Verma, convener of the IISc's Sustainable Transportation Lab, opined that a double-decker corridor is fundamentally incompatible with metro rail's objectives and with Bengaluru's sustainable mobility and livability goals. Besides reducing ridership, the report said a double-decker corridor would lead to an increase in pollution, inflate costs by nearly Rs 2,864 crore, and violate binding conditions attached to central funding approvals. The double corridor will have both the metro line and an elevated road built on the same pillars.

The report, prepared by Prof Ashish Verma, compares two scenarios expected in 2041: a metro-only configuration and one that combines the metro with a double-decker elevated road along the same corridor. Phase-3 covers two corridors—JP Nagar 4th Phase to Kempapura (29.2 km) and Hosahalli to Kadabagere (11.45 km). According to the report, under the double-decker scenario, daily metro ridership on the two corridors drops

from 8.09 lakh to 7.98 lakh passengers. The share of bus mode falls by 6.4 per cent and the metro share by 1.4 per cent, while car usage rises by 3.8 per cent, two-wheeler usage by 1.28 per cent, and autorickshaw/taxi by 2.8 per cent. With the additional road capacity prompting people to shift from high-occupancy public transport to private vehicles, total vehicle kilometres travelled would jump, adding 17,012 kg of carbon dioxide (CO₂), 85.9 kg of carbon monoxide (CO), and 1.1 kg of PM_{2.5} to daily emissions. While fuel consumption during the West Asia conflict became a national concern, the report says that it would increase by 7,000 litres a day under the double-decker scenario. Double-decker integration would increase phase-3 capital costs by Rs 2,863.53 crore for Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) over the metro-only project. Cost increases arise from larger pier diameters, deeper foundations, elevated stations, and higher multimodal integration costs. These expenditures deliver no public transport benefit and impose a long-term financial burden on BMRCL and the State Government, the report read.

The report thus underscores the importance of carefully evaluating road-based capacity enhancements in transit-oriented corridors, as they may contradict public transport investments and sustainability objectives. The report also raises legal red flags. Sanction letters for Bengaluru Metro Phases 1, 2, 2A, and 2B require the Karnataka government to adopt traffic rationalisation measures that promote metro ridership, prioritise multimodal integration, and implement the project strictly as per the approved detailed project report. In what is considered a dream project of Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, he announced in February 2025 that all upcoming metro lines in Bengaluru would be constructed as part of double-decker corridor projects at a cost of Rs 9,800 crore. Phase 3 of the project, which includes the Orange Line, was approved in August 2024 for Rs 15,611 crore and includes two elevated corridors totalling 44.65 km.

Ayodhya Bar Association to boycott accused in Ram temple fund case, help prosecution



The Ayodhya Bar Association (ABA) Monday announced it will boycott the eight accused in the alleged embezzlement of funds for the Ram temple and said it would impose a fine of Rs 5 lakh on lawyers if they represent them. The ABA made the announcement after holding a meeting of all its office bearers and members.

An office bearer of the Association stated that the advocates have unanimously decided to deny legal aid to the accused for hurting the sentiments of the Hindu community. The crime was committed within the temple premises by those who were given the responsibility to protect it," the office bearer added.

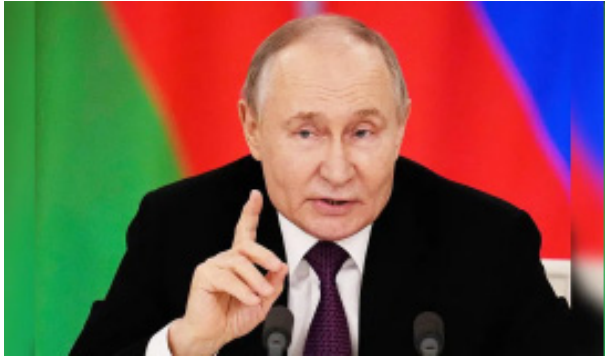
Bar association President Kalika Prasad Mishra told media persons that a team of advocates would instead help in prosecuting the accused. A few of the advocates in the meeting even proposed to give a call for an agitation if Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai and trustee Anil Mishra, both of whom tendered their resignations two days ago, did not leave Ayodhya soon. Till now, eight people – Ramshankar Yadav alias Tinnu, Lavkush Mishra, Anukal Mishra, Ramashankar Mishra, Avinash Shukla, Manish Kumar Yadav, Subhash Srivastav, and Karunesh Pandey – have been arrested in the case.

New industrial Hathras hub to be linked to Jewar airport

Hathras is also being planned as a satellite town for Agra to ease industrial pressure on the city. The UP government has initiated work on a 10,000-acre greenfield urban centre in Hathras under the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority's (YEIDA) Master Plan 2041, with the project being planned as a major industrial manufacturing hub linked to the upcoming Noida International Airport at Jewar.

The proposed Hathras Urban Centre, one of four major urban nodes planned by YEIDA along with Aligarh, Mathura and Agra, will span nearly 4,000 hectares across 50 villages in Hathras and Sarni tehsils. The authority has appointed RV Engineering Consultants Limited to prepare the master plan using GIS-based mapping technology. Officials said that the project will be developed as a mixed-use industrial and residential satellite town with dedicated industrial, residential, commercial-logistics and green zones. More than 15% of the planning area has been reserved for green and open space to maintain ecological balance. The authority said the city's location within the catchment area of the Noida International Airport, along with connectivity through the Yamuna Expressway and other state highways is expected to make it an attractive destination for manufacturing and logistics investments. It is also being planned as a satellite town for Agra to ease industrial pressure on the city. Officials said the project would build on Hathras' existing industrial base of more than 10,000 registered MSME units.

Ukrainian drones set another Russian oil refinery ablaze as Putin admits fuel shortages



Kyiv: Ukraine kept up its heavy drone assault on Russia, setting fire to a major oil refinery in the south, as President Vladimir Putin acknowledged for the first time on Sunday that the country was facing a "certain deficit" of fuel and vowed to strengthen protection of oil facilities and boost fuel output. Ukraine has markedly stepped up its long-range attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities in recent months, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for its invasion – now in its fifth year – and make Russians feel the consequences.

"Our long-range sanctions" reached two oil refineries in Russia," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on the Telegram messaging app on Sunday. "Each (strike) means a reduction in the resources that fuel the Russian war machine, and another step toward peace." The campaign has choked Russian fuel supplies, causing widespread shortages and long lines at gas stations across the country and prompting authorities in many regions to introduce fuel rationing. According to Western analysts, it has also slowed Moscow's efforts on the battlefield, heaping pressure on the Kremlin to come to the negotiating table. Putin says Ukrainian attacks aim to split Russian society. Speaking to a Russian state TV reporter, Putin described the Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries as an attempt to "cause a split in Russian society and force Russia to halt, even if only briefly, the advance of our troops along the line of contact, and create conditions for launching a negotiation process on terms advantageous to our adversary." "We will not give them that chance," Putin said, adding that "strikes on our infrastructure, wherever they are directed, have absolutely no effect on the situation at the front, on the line of contact." He said for the first time that Ukraine has proposed a halt on deep strikes, arguing that Kyiv made the offer because Russian strikes deep into Ukrainian territory are more powerful and devastating. The Russian leader added that Kyiv also offered to limit the fighting to the four regions that Russia annexed but never fully captured – Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. He rejected the proposal, arguing it would allow Ukraine to relocate its forces that are fighting Russian troops in other areas to let them focus on fending off the Russian attacks in the four south-eastern regions.

Ukrainian drones set major Russian refinery on fire. Meanwhile, debris from downed Ukrainian drones sparked a blaze at the refinery in Slavyansk-na-Kubani, a town in Russia's Krasnodar region, east of occupied

Crimea, according to regional Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev. The falling debris killed one person in Slavyansk and wounded another in a nearby village, local authorities said. The facility is one of southern Russia's major refineries, processing close to 4 million tons of crude per year, according to its operator's website. It is also a key source of petroleum products intended for export through Russia's Black Sea ports, including fuel oil, naphtha and marine fuel.

Zelenskyy also claimed that another Russian refinery, in the Yaroslavl region around 700 kilometers (435 miles) from the Ukrainian border, was hit during the nighttime strikes. There were no immediate reports from Russian authorities about the strike on the Yaroslavl refinery. Local Gov. Mikhail Evraev reported on Sunday morning that some roads between Moscow and the region's capital, Yaroslavl, were temporarily closed due to "an enemy attack by Ukrainian drones." Fuel shortages in Russia as Putin says plans will be adjusted. For months, Ukraine has been stepping up attacks on energy facilities deep inside Russia. Despite a raft of Western sanctions, Moscow remains among the world's top exporters of oil and natural gas.

More recently, Ukraine has attempted to choke off fuel deliveries to Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula illegally annexed by Moscow in early 2014. Last weekend, Kremlin-installed officials in Crimea suspended gasoline sales to civilians, after Kyiv's targeting of supply routes triggered the worst energy crisis there since the annexation. Speaking at a meeting with officials that focused on the fuel situation, Putin admitted that the country was "going through a difficult period," but insisted that Moscow would "honor all its social obligations." Shortly after, he told state TV that the country's arms industries will quickly ramp up production of air defense systems to fend off Ukrainian attacks. Putin also said that Russia will import more fuel and speed up repair works at oil facilities to end the "temporary deficit." "All damaged facilities are being restored quite quickly, and the issues that arise are not critical," he said. Putin specifically pledged to quickly deal with fuel shortages in Crimea, saying that fuel deliveries to the Black Sea peninsula by land and sea will rise and voicing confidence that "this task will be accomplished." As fuel shortages spread across Russia, the governor of the Irkutsk region in Siberia, thousands of kilometers (miles) from the Ukrainian border, Igor Kobzev announced that drivers will only be allowed to buy no more than 50 liters (13 gallons) of fuel per vehicle per day at state-run Rosneft gas stations in the province. Other gas stations may set lower limits. Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that Moscow was actively reviewing fuel export agreements to avoid compromising domestic needs. Drones, bombs and missiles target more regions. Also on Sunday, a Russian aerial bomb killed two people in Zaporizhzhia – a city in southern Ukraine – and injured 16 others, including two children, said regional administration head Ivan Fedorov. In Russia's border region of Belgorod, Ukrainian drone strikes killed one person and injured another earlier on Sunday, according to acting local Gov. Alexander Shuvayev. Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces shot down

US, Iran agree to sustain Strait of Hormuz ceasefire, resume broader nuclear talks



Washington: The United States and Iran have agreed to halt their recent military exchanges around the Strait of Hormuz and move forward with negotiations aimed at preserving a fragile ceasefire, even as both sides continue to disagree over who has authority over one of the world's most important maritime trade routes. According to reports by The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Washington Post, officials from both countries signalled on Sunday that technical talks would continue despite several days of retaliatory strikes that had raised fears of a broader regional conflict. A US official, quoted by both The New York Times and The Washington Post, said the two sides had agreed to halt attacks in the Strait and allow commercial shipping to resume. "Both sides will stand down for now and vessels can move freely," the official said, according to The Washington Post.

The New York Times reported that technical discussions would continue on implementing the memorandum of understanding that produced the fragile ceasefire, although Iran had yet to publicly confirm the reported understanding. The renewed diplomatic push follows four days of military exchanges that began after attacks on commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. The United States blamed Iran for the attacks and responded with strikes on Iranian military infrastructure. Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks targeting US military facilities in Bahrain and Kuwait, although US officials said the projectiles were intercepted or failed to reach their in-

tended targets. Despite the apparent breakthrough, the two sides remain sharply divided over the future administration of the Strait. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi insisted on Sunday that Tehran alone has responsibility for managing maritime traffic through the waterway under the memorandum signed with Washington earlier this month. "Under the memorandum of understanding, no other entity or country has any responsibility in this regard," Araghchi said during a news conference in Baghdad, according to reporting by The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post and The New York Times. He also warned that "any intervention or attempt to create arrangements contrary" to the agreement would "complicate the situation, delay the return of normalcy" and postpone the reopening of the Strait. Washington, however, maintains that freedom of navigation must be preserved. US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz warned that Iran would face further consequences if attacks on commercial shipping continued. "If the Iranian regime thinks for a second that President Trump is going to sit by, stand by, while Iran continues to attack international shipping without a response, they're sadly mistaken," Waltz told Fox News. President Donald Trump also renewed his warning to Tehran after authorising additional US strikes over the weekend. "There may come a point when we are no longer able to be reasonable, and will be forced to militarily complete the job that we very successfully started," Trump wrote on Truth Social, adding: "If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" The recent violence briefly disrupted commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint through which roughly one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil trade normally passes. The New York Times reported that oil prices edged higher as investors monitored the security situation, while commercial shipping resumed cautiously after the reported agreement. The Wall Street Journal reported that both countries now intend to resume broader negotiations aimed at ending hostilities and addressing Iran's nuclear programme, with discussions expected to focus initially on restoring normal shipping through the Strait.

Ireland stun India by one run to complete historic 2-0 T20I series sweep

Belfast: Ireland stepped up when it mattered the most to defeat India by just one run and complete a memorable 2-0 series sweep — their first-ever bilateral triumph over the Asian heavyweights. Vice-captain Tilak Varma's fighting 55 kept India in the hunt, but debutant Jai Moondra's early strikes and disciplined death bowling ensured the hosts defended 154/8 at the Civil Service Cricket Club in Stormont on Sunday. Harry Tector, playing his 100th T20I game, anchored the innings with a scratchy but vital 53, while the bowlers produced a superb team performance to keep India at bay. Moondra and Matthew Holland picked up three wickets apiece. The

result ended India's streak of 16 consecutive T20I series wins dating back to 2023 and also marked one of the greatest weekends in Irish cricket history. Under newly appointed T20I captain Lorcan Tucker, the side missed five first-choice players. Ireland showed remarkable spirit to defend totals in both games and celebrate a famous triumph in front of a jubilant home crowd. For India, the series defeat was a sobering reminder of the challenges outside IPL-style batting decks and their continued struggles against left-arm pace. Despite Varma's resistance, the middle order faltered under pressure, leaving the T20 World Cup champions humbled.

Pakistan says 29 militants killed in strikes along Afghanistan border after Karachi attack

Islamabad: Pakistan on Monday said at least 29 militants were killed in an intelligence-based ground operation it carried out along the Pakistan-Afghan border. The strikes against the hideouts and safe havens of terrorists came in after terrorists tried to storm a paramilitary Rangers headquarters in Karachi on Saturday, Information Minister Atta Tarar said on Monday. Tarar confirmed that the attacks were in reaction to the recent multiple terrorist incidents inside Pakistan against the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Pakistan Rangers (Sindh) Camp, Karachi.

He said, "A well-planned intelligence-based ground operation was carried out by security forces along the Pakistan-Afghan border, followed by calibrated strikes in the border region against the hideouts and safe havens of terrorists belonging to Jamaat ul Ahrar and Fitna al Khwarij, killing twenty-nine khwarij." "On June 28 2026, security forces conducted an intelligence-based ground operation against a group of terrorists near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he said. In continuation of "Operation Ghazab Lil Haq", based on credible intelligence, precise

targeting of terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to Jamaat ul Ahrar and Fitna al khwarij have also been carried out on the night of June 28-29, in the border region of Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab Lil-Haq on February 26 in response to alleged attacks by the Afghan Taliban forces at 53 locations along the 2,600-km-long border. "Three targets in Paktia, Paktika and Kunar were destroyed during precision strikes, killing twenty-five terrorists. Large quantities of weapons and ammunition stored at these Marakiz and hideouts were also destroyed," he said. Earlier, the Army said that three soldiers were killed in the attack on the Rangers building in Karachi, while forces killed three attackers in retaliatory fire, and one terrorist was injured and arrested. Banned Jamatul Ahrar had accepted the responsibility for the attack. According to sources, the injured rebel told during the investigation that he belonged to Afghanistan, where the attack was planned and carried out by the facilitation of a local terrorist of Bajaur. Pakistan has been accusing the Taliban regime in Kabul of providing support to terrorists for cross-border attacks. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant attacks targeting police and security forces in recent years. Authorities have blamed the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP.

How 5 weeks of war shattered some of Iran's cherished monuments



A first set of blast waves set ancient domes and minarets trembling around the most famous square in the ancient city of Isfahan. Another bombing in the city center, two days later, blanketed the floors of a 400-year-old royal complex with shards of debris. Those Israeli airstrikes, on March 7 and 9, shook the monuments at Naqsh-e Jahan square and the Chehel Sotoun Palace, two of Iran's most treasured cultural complexes. Two weeks later, plaster and broken tile still crunched underfoot in some places. "These buildings were like part of us," said Rasoul Mosavi, his head still bandaged in gauze from the injury

he received in the explosion. He led Reuters journalists through the museum where he has worked as a security guard for 16 years. "This place is very dear to my heart." From the roof, the intended target of the March 9 bomb was visible less than 200 meters away: the Isfahan governor's building, which was partially destroyed but also apparently empty when it was struck.

In March, before the cease-fire in the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, Reuters journalists were granted rare access to the palace and Naqsh-e Jahan square and its surroundings, as well as two palaces in Tehran. They saw firsthand how the war has damaged Iran's historic sites, including some protected under an international treaty administered by the U.N. cultural body UNESCO. In all, Reuters journalists observed damage at 11 historic buildings. Most of the windows in the museum were shattered. The ceiling of the main hall collapsed, exposing the building's bones. Plaster and glass surrounded mannequins wearing traditional colorful Iranian garb. The top floor of the governor's office, less than 200 meters away, was all but destroyed. The governor was not injured in the strike.

Mediators set up de-escalation channels ahead of US-Iran talks, source says



DUBAI/WASHINGTON, Iranian and U.S. technical teams working on the implementation of an interim peace deal are expected to meet in Doha in the coming days, a source told Reuters on Monday, after tit-for-tat weekend strikes threatened to derail the fragile accord. Mediators have established communications channels to de-escalate any incidents, and technical talks are set to continue, the source, with knowledge of the discussions, added. The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

A senior Iranian source said there would be a meeting in Doha on Tuesday, but unlike previous technical talks between Tehran and Washington in Switzerland, the focus would be on managing the Strait of Hormuz and de-escalating tensions. U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed in a social media post that there would be a meeting in Doha on Tuesday, but gave no details. The U.S. and Iran signed a 14-point memorandum of understanding aimed at ending four months of conflict on June 17, under which both sides agreed to cease hostilities and reopen the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas typically transits. Closure of the waterway sent oil prices to above \$100 a barrel, pushing up global inflation and causing a political headache ahead of midterm elections for Trump, who touted falling oil and gas prices in a series of other early morning posts on Monday. The accord paves the way for 60 days of more in-depth talks on thornier issues such as Iran's nuclear program, although both sides have given conflicting accounts as to what was agreed. RELEASE OF FROZEN IRANIAN ASSETS Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that \$6 billion out of \$12 billion of assets frozen in Qatar would be released following the accord and returned to Iran, Iranian state media reported. He described the memorandum, which includes waivers for sanctions on Iran's oil and petrochemical sectors, as "a great victory for the Iranian people." The senior Iranian source said Doha and Tehran were in the final stages of agreeing on technicalities for the release of the first \$6 billion of frozen assets, which he said would be issued in two tranches. Oil prices rose on Monday with Brent crude futures up almost 1% after the weekend tension highlighted the fragility of the U.S.-Iran accord. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News on Monday that U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would fly to Doha this week for high-level meetings, which would take place alongside technical talks. "As far as we're concerned, we're holding up our end of the ceasefire. Violence will be met with violence," Leavitt added.

But in an indication of the uncertainty around the interim deal, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on Monday, before Trump's post, that technical working group meetings were not scheduled for this week, according to Iran's Tasnim news agency. Consultations with Qatar, including on following

up on the implementation of the other side's commitments, were continuing as usual, he said. A return to talks would follow several days of strikes and counterstrikes since an Iranian projectile hit a cargo vessel in the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, with both the U.S. and Iran accusing the other of breaking the interim ceasefire. Iran, which has sought to exert its authority over shipping in the strait, launched missiles and drones at U.S. military sites in Kuwait and Bahrain early on Sunday, shortly after Trump issued his latest threat against Iran. "There may come a point when we are no longer able to be reasonable, and will be forced to militarily complete the job that we very successfully started," Trump said on social media. "If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!" he added.

UNCERTAINTY OVER LATEST CEASEFIRE DEAL IN LEBANON About an hour after Trump's post, Kuwait's army said its air defenses were responding to missile and drone attacks, while Bahrain said sirens had sounded there. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said U.S. strikes had violated the ceasefire and that American bases in the region would "experience hell in the coming days." Meanwhile, Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a key ally of Iran-backed Hezbollah, has cast doubt on a U.S.-brokered agreement between Lebanon and Israel aimed at halting a parallel war there. Berri warned on Monday that the deal could lead to attempts to divide Lebanese and said it would not be implemented. The latest round of conflict in Lebanon began after Hezbollah struck Israel early in the war, in what it said was support of its backer Iran. Israel's response has led to mass displacement and more than 4,000 deaths in Lebanon. Tehran has said ending that conflict and withdrawing Israeli troops from the south of Lebanon are an integral part of any deal struck with the U.S. to end the wider war that began with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

Seychelles honours PM Modi with 'guardian of the blue horizon' title

Victoria (Seychelles): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday was conferred with the honorary 'Guardian of the Blue Horizon' title by Seychelles' President Patrick Herminie here, marking his 34th international honour from a foreign nation. PM Modi thanked Seychelles for the honour and dedicated it to the nations which are fighting the challenges of climate change. "Grateful to the people and Government of Seychelles as well as President Herminie for conferring upon me the 'Guardian of the Blue Horizon'," PM Modi posted on social media after receiving the honour.

"I humbly accept this honour and dedicate it to all those countries that are fighting the challenge of climate change and consider environmental protection their responsibility towards future generations. This is a pressing challenge which we have to overcome together," Modi said. PM Modi said India is ready to do whatever is required to make "our planet greener and sustainable." "This is reflected in our various domestic policies, emphasis on Mission LIFE and global efforts like the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and more," he said. Modi landed in the archipelagic nation on Saturday, for a three-day visit, during which he will hold talks with President Patrick Herminie and attend the golden jubilee celebrations of the National Day of Seychelles as the Guest of Honour. In a ceremony held at the Seychelles Coast Guard Base here, Modi also handed over a 'Made in India' fast patrol vessel to the country's coast guard, reaffirming New Delhi's commitment to strengthening their maritime security capabilities.

Why is leptospirosis claiming so many lives in Kerala?

Kashmir awaits a warm summer in 2026. How should its crops prepare?



For a disease that has displayed a consistent pattern and mortality profile over decades, leptospirosis has been claiming an unusually high number of lives in Kerala in recent years. In the past two years alone, leptospirosis emerged as the infectious disease that killed the maximum number of people, with the proportion of mortality going up every year. This has led many public health experts to now wonder if the State has been a little too complacent in its "over dependence" on the broad-spectrum antibiotic doxycycline as the one-shot strategy to prevent and manage leptospirosis to the exclusion of all other possible strategies, including better epidemiological research and improved risk communication to people.

Leptospirosis is a tropical zoonotic disease, highly integrated with an environment in which both humans and animals thrive. The *Leptospira* bacterium that causes leptospirosis spreads through the urine of infected livestock, pets, rodents and wild animals. The bacteria can persist for several weeks to months in contaminated soil and enter human bodies through minor cuts or abrasions on the skin or even through sodden skin. The profile of those who are affected by the disease has remained more or less the same: most are farmers or manual/agricultural labourers or people whose work puts them at risk of regular contact with water/soil that may be contaminated. M. Abraham Ittyachen, professor of medicine, MOSC Medical College, Kolenchery, who has been treating leptospirosis for the past two decades, says that in Central Kerala, cases usually spike during the pineapple harvest season. "Plantation workers go into the pineapple fields early in the morning. They wear gum boots, but the skin on their hands, which are unprotected, sustain micro tears from the serrated leaf edges. The dew on the leaves, is often contaminated by rodents in the farm." However, this picture is changing in recent times, with even urban residents contracting the disease. Leptospirosis cases are reported throughout the year in Kerala. Cases generally spike during the monsoon season and then start to dip as the dry season begins. Yet this year, in just the first two months, the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme has reported 567 cases and 37 deaths (including confirmed and probable cases) due to leptospirosis. In 2024, the State had the largest number of leptospirosis cases at 5,999 and 386 deaths. It was no different in 2023, when there were 5,186 cases and 282 deaths, meaning that leptospirosis mortality spiked by 36.8% just between 2023 and 2024.

"From the public health point of view," says R. Aravind, Head of Infectious Diseases, Government Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, "this rise in cases and deaths essentially means that we need to put our focus back on preventing leptospirosis because there are limits to how well we can treat the disease, the severity of which is often unpredictable." A senior clinician in the State Health Services adds: "We have to acknowledge first, that we need to do better to save lives. Is there something that we are missing? Why are some people dying of sudden worsening of the disease, while some seem to do well on antibiotics? There is a marked difference in the outcome of serious patients in hospitals too," he says. The *Leptospira* bacterium that causes leptospirosis spreads through the urine of infected livestock, pets, rodents and wild animals. File photograph used for representational purposes only.

The diversity of *Leptospira* species, serovars (variation within the bacteria species), and strains, influence disease severity and therefore, the treatment regime. Currently, the genus *Leptospira*, the causative agent of leptospirosis has over 300 serovars, as per medical literature. This is compounded by a problem with diagnosis. Leptospirosis presents with a wide spectrum of symptoms, many of which may mimic clinical symptoms of other tropical diseases like dengue, H1N1 or scrub typhus, making the diagnosis of an acute undifferentiated febrile illness very difficult. Medical literature says that in up to 8% of the cases, there could be co-infections -- for instance, leptospirosis-dengue together. Typical and atypical presentations of leptospirosis are seen in the same season. So while recognising and treating the disease early is important, this easier said than done, say doctors. The laboratory diagnosis of leptospirosis also continues to be a challenge, because current serological tests for antibodies, like ELISA, do not give confirmatory results in the acute phase of the disease. In recent years, the health department has introduced RT-PCR tests for leptospirosis screening at the State and district public health laboratories, which can give confirmatory results within the first week itself, in the early phase of the disease. But these are seriously under utilised by clinicians, who say they cannot wait for a week for results to come back as they have to start treatment early.

An over reliance on doxycycline?

The State health system's strategy, till date, has been to persuade those people considered to be at high risk of

contracting the disease, to take doxycycline as pre-exposure prophylaxis. But compliance has been poor. "In a special contingency like a flood, people might listen to the health department's directive. But expecting a dairy/paddy farmer working who works every single day in the field to take doxycycline on a regular, long-term basis would be asking too much, given that the drug has its own side effects like nausea and gastric issues," health officials say. Also, experts ask if there is too much emphasis placed on doxycycline: the latest Cochrane Systematic Review (March 14, 2024), examined the question, 'Is the use of antibiotics beneficial for treating leptospirosis?' The review included nine trials with 1,019 participants from Barbados, Brazil, Malaysia, Panama, the Philippines, and Thailand. It suggested that antibiotics (penicillin, doxycycline, azithromycin, cefotaxime, and chloramphenicol) currently used to treat leptospirosis, may have no effect on mortality (death) and side effects associated with leptospirosis infection. The 5% of cases that progress to severe disease

Leptospirosis is associated with a broad spectrum of severity, ranging from subclinical or mild illness (anicteric) in 90-95% cases, which manifests as fever, myalgia, headaches, conjunctival suffusion and mild gastrointestinal symptoms. Some of these may be self-resolving, but a small proportion can potentially develop into serious illness. These 5-10% of cases are severe and the prognosis, unpredictable, says Dr. Aravind. Patients present late, with pulmonary involvement and multi-organ failure having set in on the third or fourth day itself, requiring mechanical ventilation and dialysis. The rate of self-treatment is also high in the initial days of the fever and myalgia, when people will dose themselves with painkillers, refusing to see the doctor," says Prof. Ittyachen, and this leads to delays in treatment. "Intensive supportive management is the key to manage patients whose disease worsens. There are ICU facilities at secondary care levels in district and general hospitals, but there are acute staff shortage issues in running these facilities round the clock. So we are forced to refer all these patients to the medical colleges, which are overcrowded and where delays are possible," said a doctor in the government health service.

The profile of those who are affected by the disease has remained more or less the same: with most of the affected being most are farmers or manual/agricultural labourers or people whose work puts them at risk of regular contact with water/soil that may be contaminated. File photograph used for representational purposes only. The profile of those who are affected by the disease has remained more or less the same: with most of the affected being most are farmers or manual/agricultural labourers or people whose work puts them at risk of regular contact with water/soil that may be contaminated. File photograph used for representational purposes only. The right kind of treatment. Despite the 'over-dependence' on doxycycline however, it still remains a key element in the treatment regimen. Prof. Ittyachen says one cannot go wrong in starting doxycycline early on, even when the patients' symptoms might be hard to distinguish. However, intensive critical care is the key once the disease worsens. "If one were to look at the larger picture, disease and deaths are mostly happening amongst the low socio-economic strata. We should continue to address the high-risk groups-- farmers, dairy workers, manual labourers, veterinary department workers and anyone whose occupation puts them in contact with water and soil on a regular basis -- and reiterate the message on leptospirosis prevention," Dr. Aravind said. That said, the Health Department needs to examine if it is addressing the risk communication properly. Are people being made aware of the potential consequences of contracting leptospirosis or that proper personal protection and doxycycline prophylaxis can save lives? People should be given clear and repeated communication that fever with body pain (muscle pain, localised to calf and lumbar region) could turn out to be leptospirosis and that they should see a doctor. Young doctors in Health Service will also need some hand-holding so that they learn to recognise the disease early, doctors say.

A differential diagnosis?

One question that we need to ponder seriously would be whether a good proportion of these leptospirosis-suspected cases are, in fact, hantavirus infections. This is not a new premise. The clinical symptoms of leptospirosis and hantavirus infection are very similar. Hantavirus is considered to be the differential diagnosis of leptospirosis," T.S. Anish, a public health expert, says. In 2014 itself, the possibility that the increasing number of patients dying of suspected leptospirosis, could in fact be hantavirus cases, had been in focus, after three "suspected" hantavirus cases had been identified in Thiruvananthapuram. However, despite serological evidence of the same, the National Institute of Virology had not acknowledged this.

Watch: What is the hantavirus?

Proper confirmatory tests for hanta were still evolving then but today, PCR tests as well as IGM Elisa test for hanta are available at the Institute of Advanced Virology, Thiruvananthapuram. Director of IAV, E. Sreekumar, says that while the Institute had facilities to test for hanta, clinicians raising a query over hantavirus were rare. "We have, in recent times, tested over 50 samples of suspected leptospirosis cases for hanta but none yielded positive results. As leptospirosis is so closely linked to water bodies and the environment, it would be important to check the geographical distribution of suspected leptospirosis deaths to see if there is a pattern there," Dr. Sreekumar says. As a disease that fits perfectly into the 'One Health' framework, integrated leptospirosis prevention and control with multi-sectoral involvement



From seed distribution to crop calendars, the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) has an action plan to tackle the dry conditions it expects in Kashmir this summer. Kashmir has had a dry winter this year with the months of January and February recording a rainfall deficit of around 80%. Even though the weather department had forecast a wet spell until February 28, there has also been a significant shortfall of snow in Kashmir, plus the attendant consequences. Crop contingency plan

Experts have previously warned that if the dry weather continued, it could lead to a drought-like situation in the subsequent spring and summer. They have also stressed that it could severely affect water-dependent sectors such as irrigated agriculture (paddy), horticulture, hydroelectric power production, and even drinking water supply. Forests are also at risk of wildfires and a few have already been reported. In anticipation, researchers at SKUAST are ready with planting and adaptation strategies for farmers in the region. Asif Bashir Shikari, head of the National Seed Project at SKUAST, said Kashmir has been experiencing erratic weather for several years now. This year, the snowless winter has left the region in a precarious situation. He added that SKUAST has prepared a "crop contingency plan" led by its vice-chancellor Nazir Ganai for short- and long-term mitigation of a drought-like situation. "Briefly, our action plan for these weather fluctuations operates on two fronts. First, on logistics support, what we provide to farmers and other stakeholders in terms of benefits and support in a situation like drought; and second, it comprises farm advisory services," Asif said. "Among agricultural inputs, seed availability is the most important, especially in drought-like conditions, where having the right planting material is paramount." "Annually, we require 1.5 lakh quintals of seed, with farmers specifically depending on certified seed. To meet this demand, the university produces at least 100 quintals of breeder seed of field and vegetable crops," he added. The scientist stressed that in case of a drought-like situation, he and his peers recommend the consumption of crops other than rice and "accordingly facilitate the enhanced seed availability of drought-tolerant maize varieties and hybrids, such as SMC-8 and SMH-5, and pulses, as these crops are more resilient to dry conditions. Pulses, in particular, require less water and can still produce a reasonable yield with minimal losses."

Helping crops survive "Apart from seed management, we emphasise implementing other drought mitigation strategies. For vegetable crops, techniques like mulching -- covering the topsoil with material such as bark, wood chips, leaves, and other organic material in order to preserve moisture and improve the soil condition -- can be practiced," Asif said. Experts also recommended using anti-transpirant agents, which block plants from releasing water into the air. Similar measures are applied to horticultural crops like apples. "We also promote micro-irrigation systems, such as drip irrigation, by installing demonstration units in farmers' fields. Water-saving technologies such

as mist sprayers are already in use in saffron fields," according to Asif. "Through these combined efforts, we aim to help farmers adapt to changing weather conditions and sustain agricultural productivity." Helping crops survive also means keeping pests at bay. With rising temperature, pests that were previously docile have become invasive and more active. For example, a common pest called aphids completes its life cycle much faster and produces more generations per year in warmer weather. Leaf miner blotch, a pest of apple crops, has graduated from being a minor to a major concern for the same reason, researchers said. "This necessitates issuing advisories to farmers and suggesting innovative chemical control measures in such situations," Zafar Mehdi, associate professor in the Division of Basic Sciences and Humanities at SKUAST, said. The action plan has multiple categories of advisory services. "The meteorological department provides weather data, and based on that, we develop crop calendars." These calendars specify normal crop cycles as well as alternate crops that should be planted in case of drought conditions," Zafar added. "Take Budgam, for example, a significant vegetable-producing region," Asif said. "Abrupt climatic changes in the Kashmir Valley, including rising temperatures and [incidence of] drought, threaten vegetable crop production. Kharif vegetables, particularly those from the Solanaceae and Cucurbitaceae families, suffer from heat and water stress, affecting germination, pollen sterility, growth and yield."

The corresponding interventions in this scenario, he continued, include selecting heat-tolerant crops to plant, like fava bean and cowpea, as well as short-duration varieties. He also suggested adjusting planting schedules, using improved seedling production techniques, and employing techniques that conserve soils' nutrients and moisture.

"Efficient irrigation methods like drip and micro-sprinkler systems, along with organic soil amendments and foliar nutrition, can enhance resilience and ensure sustainable vegetable production," Asif added. A persistent problem unlike food crops, however, fruit crops can't be rescued by crop rotation. They need direct mitigation strategies. "For example, advisories outline the necessary sprays for early blooming, including applications of growth regulators," according to Asif. "If almond trees bloom early, specific measures are suggested to protect the fruit. Similarly, in the event of water loss, sprays containing anti-transpirants and other essential chemicals are recommended." He added that the availability of fodder seed has also been a persistent problem because the local production of seeds is limited. And in a drought-like situation, the production drops further. "Since fodder is typically harvested at the green stage, seed production does not occur within the valley. However, seed production is essential, and the university has taken significant steps in this regard. As a strategic approach, we cultivate fodder seeds in the Jammu region."

Identifying the 'outsiders' in West Bengal

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee directed her party's rank and file to scrutinise the State's voters' list and identify the "outsiders" who have made it to the list.

Ms. Banerjee alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with the "blessings" of the Election Commission of India (ECI), has inducted citizens from other States in the West Bengal voters' list. Citing examples of voters with the same Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) number being enrolled in West Bengal and in other States, she said that the move to induct such "outsiders" into West Bengal's voter list was intended to influence the Assembly elections, which are scheduled for 2026.

The Chief Minister has told her party leaders that in every Assembly constituency, there are 20,000-30,000 voters who are "not residents of the State" and are likely to tilt the balance in the favour of the BJP, the principal Opposition party in the State. She said that elections in the State will have no meaning if the "outsiders" were not removed from the voters' list. On March 2, the ECI issued a statement. It said, "It is clarified that while EPIC numbers of some of the electors may be identical, the other details including demographic details, Assembly Constituency, and polling booth are different for the electors with the same EPIC number." Despite this assurance, Trinamool leaders have been going from door to door scrutinising the voters' list in various parts of the State. The BJP also believes that the voters' list in West Bengal is full of "outsiders". However, its idea of "outsiders" is different from the Trinamool's. The BJP leadership insists that 17 lakh voters enlisted in the State's voters' list are "illegal immigrants" from Bangladesh whose names should be removed from the list before the Assembly polls. Until the 1970s, West Bengal was a hub of industries. People from different parts of the country flocked to the State in search of jobs. A significant share of the electorate in West Bengal therefore comprises people with roots in other States;

they are referred to as the 'non-Bengali' speakers. Moreover, West Bengal was also the destination for people who left Bangladesh both before and after the 1971 Liberation War. Bangladesh shares a 4,096-km-long land border with five States in India; West Bengal alone accounts for 2,216 km. This is why the voters' list is likely to

have people who have their roots in Bangladesh, but are culturally and linguistically connected to the people of West Bengal. By challenging the voters' list, both the Trinamool and the BJP are trying to set the tone of their respective campaigns for the 2026 polls. There are similarities between their current campaigns and those of the 2021 Assembly polls. That was when the Trinamool highlighted Bengali sub-nationalism and the BJP's narrative was dominated by religious polarisation. Ms. Banerjee has been saying "Bengal will not be administered by outsiders." So far, the Trinamool has been able to portray the BJP as a party of "outsiders" whose leaders come from Gujarat and speak Hindi. Over the past decade, Ms. Banerjee has been able to convince the majority of the electorate that the BJP is full of "bohiragato (outsiders)" and "Bangla birodhi (those opposed to Bengal)". This campaign worked for her in 2021 and she seems ready to launch her poll campaign along similar lines for 2026. The BJP, which has placed all its bets on the polarisation of Hindu votes, sees the political turmoil in Bangladesh as an opportunity.



80 percent of IT workforce in Hyderabad is overweight, says Dr Nageshwar Reddy

Hyderabad: The IT workforce in Hyderabad continues to remain a high risk group for Non-Communicable Diseases due to high prevalence of obesity. A recent study conducted by the city-based Asian Institute of Gastroenterology (AIG) Hospitals among the IT workforce in Hitec City has indicated that 80 percent of them are overweight.

"80 percent overweight is very significant. But people are not taking it seriously. It is very important to take it very seriously because I think lot of health complications can be prevented and lot of savings can be done on health costs if weight is under control.



Gautam Gambhir faces tactical headache over bleeding prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after Ireland shocker



New Delhi: How to fit Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's generational talent into a settled side was the question that India faced at the beginning of the tour and after two unexpected losses to Ireland, the only clear answer seems to be — find a way to do it. The paying public has been ready to queue up at the turnstiles at least three hours before the start of an international game in the hope that the 15-year-old would be slotted in.

The Indian team management has, however, steadfastly insisted on following the process. After losing to Ireland, the process would definitely be up for a review. The 15-year-old prodigy couldn't be fitted into the playing eleven as India's opening duo of Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma hadn't done anything wrong in the T20 World Cup and deserved to play the very next series where the national team took part. But now the question of not playing Sooryavanshi doesn't even arise unless the team management headlined by coach Gautam Gambhir remains firm that the Samson-Abhishek combination is irreplaceable. Selections are never as straightforward as they seem but the Team India think-tank will have to find a plausible solution in the five-match T20 series in England beginning July 1. The wickets are expected to be slightly flatter going by how they have behaved in summers during the past few seasons. "Against Ireland, the kind of form that Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was in coming into the series, he could have been picked for both games. You could

have picked Abhishek and Samson in one game each and played Sooryavanshi in both games. It was a good platform to try talented youth," the legendary Sunil Gavaskar said on Aaj Tak. "You have to play him from the first game in England. The team management needs to drop out of form batters and play Sooryavanshi. Either you fit him in at No. 3 keeping both your openers but whatever it is Sooryavanshi has to play in the first game in England on July 1. If you want to shock England in first game, then Sooryavanshi must play," he asserted. If the think-tank doesn't want to disturb the Samson-Abhishek combination, then batters, starting with Ishan Kishan, will have to drop down a slot. The new order could have Sooryavanshi at three followed by Kishan at No. 4, Shreyas Iyer at No. 5, Tilak Varma at No. 6, Shivam Dube at No. 7 and Axar Patel at No. 8. This came work out on the assumption that Suryansh Shedge would be dropped from the first game against England. From Nos 5 to 8, one can be flexible depending on match situation and need for left-right combination. If Shivam Dube comes in at No. 7, then he would be expected to bowl four overs on most days as only Abhishek bowls part-time left-arm spin in the top-order which is at least usable in international games. Dube is no Hardik Pandya and at best, he could be a sixth bowler in the T20 set-up and there starts the real problem. All of India's T20 batting heroes like to hit big in IPL knowing that there is an Impact Player as a cushion. The moment they play on tracks which have something to offer, it poses a problem for them. Having played on tracks that can be likened to 'National Highways', Indian batters have lost sight of the proverbial plan B if attack at all costs doesn't work. If one wants to play the Samson-Abhishek pair along with Sooryavanshi, one has to either sacrifice Ishan Kishan or Tilak Varma to ensure that five specialist bowlers and not four with two all-rounders. However, the most logical solution would be to drop Samson. It would be an unpopular move but Samson has had two first ball ducks in two games and looked out of sync in slightly bowler-friendly conditions where his technique got tested. But if Sooryavanshi is to be blooded without disturbing the balance of the bowling attack, the team think-tank needs to talk to Samson.

'Sooryavanshi ready for India debut, but will have to wait': ten Doeschate



Despite India's stunning 0-2 debacle in the T20I series in Ireland, where the top-order crumbled twice in three days, 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will have to bide his time on the bench before being marked for his debut, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said on Sunday. India suffered back-to-back losses to the Irish side in Belfast, their first series loss across 16 series and three years. On Sunday, India's bid to draw the series level fell flat as they fell by one run in a middling 155-run chase. Compounding the woes of the new captain, Shreyas Iyer, was his own form in both games, as well as the indifferent run of openers Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson. As Sooryavanshi warmed the bench, both Abhishek and Samson fell for golden ducks in the chase, a first instance

for India where both openers fell for first-ball blobs. Sooryavanshi's presence in the squad has captured all the buzz. He enjoyed a record-breaking IPL season at the top of the Rajasthan Royals batting order and later powered India A's Tri-Nation series win with a scintillating 11-ball fifty in the final against Sri Lanka. ten Doeschate admitted that while Sooryavanshi is all set to take flight in international cricket, the presence of accomplished World Cup stars will delay his debut. "ten Doeschate defends Samson. "He's absolutely ready to play international cricket, there's no doubt about that," ten Doeschate said when asked how far Sooryavanshi was from making his international debut. "But also, I think it's not a question to say you can leave Sanju Samson out. A guy who went a long way to winning India the World Cup three months ago. A guy who's had a fairly good IPL," Doeschate told reporters. It's important in terms of giving players confidence, and the message we're sending to players. We want to give guys a long run in the team. So, you know, as ready as Vaibhav is and as excited as we are and you are to see him play, he's going to have to go through the same process as everyone else and, you know, bide his time and wait. But certainly no questions about how good he is and how ready he is," he added. This will likely mean that Sooryavanshi will continue to be on the bench at the start of the five-match T20Is in England, starting on July 1. The Bihar prodigy has only been named in the T20I squad in England, and is also named in India's Asian Games squad for the competition in September.

'Told my wife don't have the fight left in me': Stokes explains retirement call



Ben Stokes stunned the cricket world on Sunday as he announced his immediate retirement from international cricket at the end of the ongoing Test match between England and New Zealand at Trent Bridge. The England Test captain has been in the eye of a storm for the past few weeks after being involved in an altercation with a Saracens rugby player in a nightclub alongside teammate Gus Atkinson after the first Test at Lord's. Returning to lead the side this week after a one-match suspension, Stokes broke the news of his retirement to his teammates in the dressing room mid-way through Day 4 of the Test match, where the hosts were eventually set a target of 353. The 35-year-old later explained the reason behind his decision to call it quits.

"Since the Ashes, it's been really tough," said Stokes, who was appointed England's longest-format captain in 2022. "It's the best thing I've ever been asked to do, to captain this team and captain this country. As good as it is, there are parts where it does drain you, and it does

affect you in an emotional way."

Stokes said he revealed the physical and mental exhaustion of his situation to his wife before finalising his decision. "Over the last five or six weeks, it felt like something else I had to try and overcome. I feel like I've been pretty good at that throughout my career- at overcoming on-field and off-field disappointment. But the emotional side of this since Australia... the way I described it to my wife is that I don't actually think I have any more fight left in me to get over this, to be honest," he told Sky Sports at stumps on Sunday. "I'm pretty happy and content with everything I've managed to do," he said. "I've captained, I'm an Ashes winner, I've won a 50-over World Cup and a T20 World Cup. I've also had the opportunity to captain the team and play alongside some of the best players to have played the game." "What we do is brutal-physically, mentally, and all of that. Even the stuff away from the game, the hard work you have to put in, is just getting a bit tiring these days. At thirty-five, I feel like I have to do so much physical work just to keep doing what I do out there. I had to ask myself, 'Do I have that in me? Do I have that fight in me to keep doing that?' because I know exactly what it takes to walk out there and play for this country." "So, there are many things that have leaned me towards knowing that this is the right decision. There is the emotional side, the physical side, the mental side, and, yeah," he concluded. Stokes bows out with over 10,000 international runs and 300-plus wickets, including the rare distinction of being just the third player to bag 7000-plus Test runs and 200-plus wickets after Garry Sobers and Jacques Kallis. The left-hander opened the batting in his final walk to the crease and played a quickfire cameo with two sixes in the chase before holing out on 30 off 20 deliveries.

Ben Stokes retires: the bottle, the kit bag, and a career like no other



"You don't want to play for England. You just want to piss it up the wall with your mates, and have a good time." Andy Flower said that to Ben Stokes in 2013, after he and Matt Coles were sent home from an England Lions tour of Australia for staying out until 5.30 in the morning. It was the kind of thing said to a talented young man who seemed determined to waste what he had been given. Around Christmas that year, Stokes was walking with his girlfriend Clare when they chanced upon Flower in conversation with other coaches. Stokes wanted to say: I told you so. Clare restrained him. She said Flower must have used it to motivate, not to disparage. Stokes knew she was right. He just couldn't say it yet. What happened between that Lions tour and a dressing room at Trent Bridge on Sunday is the career. He had already sat down with a psychologist by then, at Lord's on a July day in 2013, sidling into the stands next to Mark Bawden. His captain at Durham had texted him: are you ok? He wasn't. He told Bawden instead. Bawden gave his verdict: Stokes was suffering from Bottle Bottle Bang syndrome. He had been throwing his emotions into a glass bottle for years. Bawden gave him a routine for the worst moments: go to the dressing room and pack up your kit bag. "My job is helping people realise that confidence isn't the absence of fear or doubt. It's trust in your method." A 258 in Cape Town in 2016. The fastest 250 in Test history. Eleven sixes, an England record. Then the T20 World Cup final in Kolkata. West Indies needed 19 off the last over, Carlos Brathwaite hit Stokes for four consecutive sixes. The bottle banged in public. He let the sixes go. That was new. Bristol, September 2017. A nightclub. Arrested. Charged with affray. Dropped from the Ashes tour. "The hardest bit was when the day had finished and I had gone back to my room. I didn't want to leave the hotel. I was just sat on my bed." Found not guilty. Fined. Returned, quietly, rebuilt.

2019 World Cup final, Lord's. England fall to 86 for 4. Stokes makes 84 not out, ties the game, bats again in the Super Over. England win on boundary count. Six weeks later, Headingley. England set 359, slide to 286 for 9, last man Jack Leach at the other end. Leach scores one run. Stokes scores the rest. England win by one wicket.

IND vs ENG 1st Test, Day 1: Bazball arrives in India Hyderabad: England's batter Ben Stokes plays a shot during the first day of the first Test cricket match between India and England, at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium

in Hyderabad, Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024. (PTI Photo/Shailendra Bhojak) His father Ged died in December 2020 from brain cancer. In June 2021 Stokes announced an indefinite break. "It was like I had a glass bottle I kept on throwing my emotions into. Eventually, it got too full and just exploded." Five months away. He came back, as he always came back. Joe Root resigned the captaincy in April 2022. Stokes was appointed. With Brendon McCullum he built Bazball. England swept New Zealand, swept Pakistan in Pakistan. Stokes became only the second cricketer, alongside Kallis, to combine 7,000 Test runs with 250 Test wickets. Twenty Tests without a hundred. He gave it to the team instead. Brook. Chelsea. Curfews. And in that Trent Bridge Test, Stokes having to gesture Archer over on the field — a public summons to join a celebration the man had refused. The freedom Stokes modelled had been earned through arrest, trial, breakdown, a father's death. It wasn't clear it was transferable. Bazball said: express yourself. Some players heard only the first word.

A Monday night in June 2026. A nightclub, a Saracens rugby player, a fracas. An England security officer needed stitches. He missed the second Test. Before returning to Trent Bridge, Stokes referred only to leading the team "this week." Before the fourth day he told his teammates of his decision. It was the second time in four days he had stood before them asking for something; the first time, he had been saying sorry. The reasons can wait, why, but I've had many trips to the well before for this team, for you blokes, for people beforehand and I've got one more trip to do. The only thing I ask, please, is can everyone do the same. The only thing I want is to be able to walk off that field, regardless of the result, knowing that I've had this group give everything for the last two days. I've got the emotional side out of it. Now it's time to go to work. Please, everyone else come with me." After tea he walked out to open the batting with Duckett. The New Zealand players formed a guard of honour. His England teammates lined the boundary. Root met him at the rope with a high-five and a hug. First ball, he charged. Stepped out of the crease, moved leg-side, slapped it to mid-off. Second ball, he attempted the reverse sweep. Missed. That was Ben Stokes in his last international innings — charge first, ask questions later. He hit two sixes: one lofted over the bowler's head, one scooped over backward square leg, the momentum taking him across the stumps and off the pitch entirely. Then Foulkes angled one in, Stokes went for another boundary, lost shape, and Mitchell dived low to take the catch. He walked off after one last look around Trent Bridge. Every New Zealand player found him on the way back. Santner hugged him. Family stood. Former players stood. The crowd stood. Two nightclub incidents, fifteen years apart. The first nearly destroyed him. The second ended him on his own terms, mid-spell, at Trent Bridge. Between them: the 258, the World Cup final, Headingley, the break, the father's death. In the only language that mattered, he had told Flower so all along. He packed up the kit bag one last time.

Kidambi Srikanth falters at last step in US Open



Kidambi Srikanth delayed a change of shirt to the very end of the mid-set break in the decider. So when the chair umpire refused to allow him a change of tee, summoning him to resume, he was taken aback. Things pretty much unravelled from that 7-11 juncture, as Srikanth lost the US Open finals, despite possessing the game to counter Taiwanese Su Li Yang. He lost 15-21, 21-16, 9-21.

There's very little to be done in badminton once the umpire from her perch orders you get going after a break. It was one of those things he absent-mindedly left to the very last second after swigging water in the middle of a decider break, given the game was at scorching pace. Maybe the speed of exchanges and deliberate rushing (a legit tactic) by Su was wearing him down anyway after his Titanic semifinal win on Saturday. But Srikanth missed an opportunity to win a title on Tour again. The game is still intact. The fitness has no question marks in terms of niggles, though it is nowhere as it was when he was 23 — obviously. But Srikanth does tend to get overwhelmed when a final, a chance of a title fetches up. Moreover, he forgets that it's his own terrific game that has placed him in that position, so he ought to back himself. Su is a typical Taiwanese — pace is their currency. Like Lin Chun-Yi. Besides his big shoulder smash, and a general proclivity to ambush opponents with the high rate of the shuttle coming back to them at quick clip, he didn't quite have answers to Srikanth's net magic.

The followup charge to the net after a smash and his sorcery there remain Srikanth's finest moments on a badminton court. He really creates angles and ammunition both from that station — confounding most opponents. But his wayward smash to the lines was back, and he botched half a dozen — both straight and cross ones. Still, he managed to take control of the second set after dropping the first. There too, he had 7 set points at 20-13, but allowed Su 3 more gifts too many before closing out. At 14-10 though, Srikanth moved like he owned the Titan arena, owned Fullerton, California, owned the United States even. It was a brilliantly constructed point using his skill to

mix magnificent net angles with a midcourt finish. The slightly confusing cheers of India Jia-you by Chinese speakers, which would switch to Li Yang at times, the two odd Telugu cheers and chants of Ganpati Bappa Morya in this quaint arena, had set up a fine decider as his shot quality answered the Taiwanese pace-overdrive wittily. Srikanth was troubled by Su even at Thailand, and this loss is his second straight to the tall, attacking player. But he truly disintegrated — his body language slumping — only after he was disallowed from changing his shirt as the break time ran out. Having worked on his fitness diligently, picking the right tournaments and not rushing, understanding his limitations from after the injury-hit, Srikanth's career is far from finished. Yet the titles elude — at Malaysia and now at US Open. The answers lie in improving endurance fitness even more, for finals always happen on Day 5, needing mileage and wear 'n tear of the first four matches. The sprayed smashes point to diminishing fitness heading into Day 5, because the game lacks no smarts, only sharpness. Kidambi Srikanth's strokeplay, his game style and elegance bring crowds any part of the world — and keep them rooted to the seats, as he enchants even neutrals. But he owes himself a title for all that effort and hard work and perseverance. Being thrown off his composure by a chair that dictates, can be avoided. Just as leaving the upped ante to the end of a set.

BJP UP in-charge Nitin Nabin to visit Lucknow to review 2027 Assembly poll strategy

Lucknow: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National President Nitin Nabin will visit Lucknow on July 3 and 4 as part of a two-day organisational tour, party sources said on Monday. The visit comes at a time when the BJP is intensifying its preparations for the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

According to sources, the BJP chief will undertake a comprehensive review of the party's organisational functioning and assess the election preparedness in the state. His visit is being viewed as significant, particularly in the backdrop of the impending announcement of the new Uttar Pradesh BJP organisational structure and the party's strategy for the 2027 Assembly elections. On Thursday, the BJP announced a new organisational team for Uttar Pradesh, carrying out a major restructuring of its state unit ahead of the Assembly elections.

Ambati Rayudu backs Ishan Kishan for number 4 spot in India ODI squad upon Virat Kohli return

New Delhi: Former India batter Ambati Rayudu on Monday said Ishan Kishan is ideally suited to bat at number four in the ODI side once Virat Kohli returns to the playing eleven for the three-game series against England, starting on July 14, citing the left-handed wicketkeeper-batter's scoring ability against both pace and spin making him a valuable addition in the batting order. Kishan made a memorable comeback to ODI cricket with scores of 34 and 125 in ODIs against Afghanistan in Dharamshala and Lucknow earlier this month. With Kohli unavailable due to a hamstring injury, Kishan, ODI captain Shubman Gill and T20I skipper Shreyas Iyer all batted at the number three spot once. "When it comes to Ishan Kishan, it is great that he is part of the ODI setup and being a left-hander, he'll

add a lot of value. So I see him eventually bat at number four. That is an ideal number for him. Being a left-hander, he plays spin exceptionally well and also plays pace well. "So he and Shreyas Iyer can have that role of number four and five batters. That will be a very, very formidable number four and five for India going forward," Rayudu said while replying to a question from IANS in a virtual group interaction facilitated by Sony Sports Network. In the build-up to the 2027 ODI World Cup, there's been endless debate on whether Kohli and Rohit Sharma are certainties to play in the mega event. Rayudu, who played 55 ODIs and six T20Is for India and was shockingly dropped from the 2019 ODI World Cup squad, recalled how Kohli's mental strength and preparation has always been top-class, citing the turnaround he made after a difficult Test series in England in 2014

Born to a throuple, 3-time State Award winner Shruthi 'doesn't know' her biological mother



Although she has done only three Malayalam films thus far, and her last outing in the industry was over two decades ago, Shruthi Krishna is one of those rare actors whom Malayalees are unlikely to forget, no matter how many years have passed. Even if her name doesn't ring a bell immediately, her face will rush to the minds of movie audiences as soon as they hear the name "Ambili," thanks to the hilarious hospital scene in Kottaram Veettille Apputtan (1998). That was her sophomore Malayalam film, where she starred opposite Jayaram, after making her debut in the industry a year earlier with the Mammooty-led Oral Mathram (1997). She later appeared alongside Cochin Haneefa in CI Mahadevan 5 Adi 4 Inchu (2004), though that film didn't garner much attention. Although she is no longer active in Malayalam cinema, Shruthi is still very much in the limelight in her home ground of Kannada, playing notable roles in both movies and television shows. Must Read | Rajinikanth's colossal disaster forced him into hiatus, 'destroyed' Manisha Koirala's career

Even if Malayalam movie audiences may know her mainly as Kottaram Veettille Apputtan's Ambili, Shruthi Krishna is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished actors of her generation in Kannada, having won the Karnataka State Film Award for Best Actress twice. She is also a recipient of the Tamil Nadu State Film Award for Best Actress. In an illustrious career spanning 36 years, she has acted in over 150 films, winning the hearts of audiences across the South. A unique family setup: Growing up with two mothers, Shruthi (née Girija) was born into a family of theatre artistes. According to Manorama Online, her father, GV Krishna, was a theatre company owner, and he married twin sisters, Radha and Rukmini, who were members of his troupe. The throuple has three children together: Shruthi, actor Sharan, and Usha. Interestingly, the family still hasn't revealed to the world which child belongs to which mother. Regardless, they all share a close bond, and Shruthi herself has often opened up about having grown up experiencing the love of two mothers instead of one. Girija made her acting debut at the age of 14, playing a supporting role in Nambidre Nambi Bitre Bidi (1990). However, in that film and her subsequent Aasegobba Meesegobba, she was credited as Vijayaradhini. Despite not particularly liking that name, she didn't protest as she was a newcomer. While working on Dwarakish's Shruthi (1990), she shared her concern with the director, who suggested that she take the movie's title as her screen name. Finding it attractive and noticing that no other major artiste had the same name, Girija re-christened herself as Shruthi. The movie became a massive hit, giving her a much-needed breakthrough. Don't Miss | Kamal Haasan kept emotional secret from dying friend; it bound him to Rajinikanth forever The rise of Kannada cinema's 'Tragedy Queen' The success of the

film brought a flood of opportunities for Shruthi Krishna, and she quickly rose to fame, thanks to her ability to perform a wide range of roles impressively, handling emotional, comedic, and even grey-shaded moments with finesse.

Meanwhile, her popularity in Kannada and immense talent paved the way for her entry into the Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam industries as well. While she won her first Karnataka State Film Award for Best Actress for her portrayal in Suresh Heblikar's Aaghaatha (1994), Shruthi's performance in K Balachander's Kalki (1996) earned her her first Tamil Nadu State Film Award for Best Actress. She knocked it out of the park in Kannada back-to-back, particularly in emotional dramas, earning the sobriquet "Tragedy Queen." Shruthi further gained popularity through her performances in women-centric movies, thereby attracting many women to cinema halls. She earned her second Karnataka State Film Award for Best Actress for her performance in director S Mahendar's Gowdru (2004), headlined by Ambareesh. She has also worked with Kannada superstar Vishnuvardhan in films such as Time Bomb (1994), Thumbida Mane (1995), Mojugara Sogasugara (1995), Veerappa Nayaka (1999), Soorappa (2000) and Sirivantha (2006). Her performances in movies such as Muddina Maava (1993), Hetta Karalu (1994), Karpoorada Gombe (1996), Gattimela (2001), Rama Shama Bhama (2005), Akka Thangi (2008), Puttakkana Highway (2011), Kalpana (2012), and Kaatera (2023) contributed to her acclaim. Cinema Anatomy | Long before historic election win, Vijay used 'pookie' innocence to conquer Tamil cinema Shruthi Krishna's 2 failed marriages, political innings, and more

At the peak of her career in the late '90s, Shruthi Krishna tied the knot with director S Mahendar, who later gave her the award-winning role in Gowdru. However, unlike many of her contemporaries, Shruthi didn't step away from cinema after marriage. She continued doing films one after the other, earning the reputation of being a powerhouse artiste who could hold her own alongside any leading man. Even when she eventually transitioned to character roles, Shruthi soared, peerless. However, she faced setbacks in her personal life. Her marriage to S Mahendar ended after 11 years. She and Mahendar have one daughter together, Gowri Shruthi. In 2013, she tied the knot with journalist-poet Chakravarthy Chandrachud, but their marriage lasted only about a year before ending in divorce. Beyond cinema, she has also been active in politics and is a member of the BJP. She served as the chairperson of both the Karnataka Women and Child Development Corporation and the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation. Aside from her acting potential and illustrious career, Shruthi Krishna's personal life has also garnered significant attention, particularly her father's marriage to twin women. However, she has always proudly spoken about having had the privilege of experiencing the love and affection of two mothers equally. In fact, Shruthi and her siblings have mentioned that even they do not even know who their biological mother is, adding that they haven't felt the need to decode it either. She reportedly said once, "For us, we didn't feel it was necessary. If we wanted to, it's a simple matter of finding the answer with one question. But we are not separate; we believe everyone is one. It is those who don't know the harmony of this family who worry about such things. They are both mothers to us. They love us equally, and we feel the same in return. There is no distinction of who belongs to whom. Is there any need to bring bias there?" Shruthi Krishna, who also emerged as the winner of Bigg Boss Kannada Season 3, was most recently seen in the Kannada movies Surya: The Power of Love and Majestic 2.

Radikaa Sarathkumar slams 'circus' after Bhagyaraj's death: 'Give dignity to dead'



Actress Radikaa Sarathkumar has renewed her criticism of how the scene outside K. Bhagyaraj's Chennai residence was handled following his death, describing it as a moment that should have been reserved for mourning but instead turned into what she called a 'circus'.

"Final goodbye, to 50 years of a very special friendship, a great creator, an evolved writer, a person who drew wonderful boundaries in cinema, a man I shared many laughs, wonderful work, who stood by my family always in his quiet loyal way. A shocking goodbye, for his family, friends, associates and fans," Radikaa Sarathkumar wrote on X, while sharing unseen pictures with the filmmaker. She went on to address the chaotic scene directly. "A place where all needed to digress and mourn in silence, turned into a circus, for all who came to pay their respects. Where and when do we change, or rather changed, to this callousness. The government and industry need to sit and chart protocols and collective

management, and give all dignity to the departed soul," she wrote. Final goodbye, to 50 years of a very special friendship, a great creator, a evolved writer, a person who drew wonderful boundaries in Cinema, a man I shared many laughs, wonderful work, who stood by my family always in his quiet loyal way. A shocking goodbye, for his family, friends, ... pic.twitter.com/8GeRJ5sipPT The tweet follows an emotional, in-person appeal Radikaa Sarathkumar, a close friend of the Bhagyaraj family, made on the day his body was brought home on Saturday. As media crews crowded around the ambulance carrying his body, making it difficult for the family to bring him inside, Radikaa Sarathkumar stepped out in tears and asked media to step back, telling them, "Cinema is our life. But a human life is different. If you want TRP, we will act in a film for you. Please give us some privacy." Even after repeated appeals, the crowd reportedly took some time to clear, delaying the family from bringing Bhagyaraj's body into the house, with his son Shanthanu Bhagyaraj and daughter-in-law Keerthi visibly distressed as they entered. K Bhagyaraj, celebrated as one of Tamil cinema's most influential writer-directors and was known as 'Master of Screenplay', died on Saturday, just over two weeks after the death of his own mentor, filmmaker Bharathiraja. His passing drew an outpouring of condolences from across the industry and politics, including from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay, and actors including Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Anil Kapoor and Chiranjeevi, with the state government according him full state honours on Sunday.

Netflix introduces individual emails for shared account profiles

Hyderabad: Netflix has introduced another change to how shared accounts work, and this time it is all about email addresses. The streaming platform has started allowing individual profiles on shared subscriptions to be linked to their own unique email addresses, giving profile users more control over how they sign in and manage their viewing experience. Until now, everyone using a shared Netflix account relied on the primary account holder's email address for verification and account access. With the new update, users can receive sign-in codes directly to their own inboxes, making it easier to log in on new devices without having to ask the account owner for help.

Shraddha Kapoor's Eetha in trouble, Vithabai Narayangaonkar's family demands title change



Actress Shraddha Kapoor is set to make an impressive return to the big screen after Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar. Her latest film Eetha is a biopic on a Lavani artist, Vithabai Narayangaonkar. While Shraddha impressed everyone with her transformation in the film's teaser, Eetha seems to have landed in an unexpected controversy. According to reports on TV9 Marathi, Vithabai's family, as well as the National Congress Party (NCP), has raised an objection to the film's title. They have questioned why Vithabai's name doesn't feature in the film's title and have also demanded that the film's name be changed. According to reports, NCP's film and cultural department has ques-

tioned Eetha's makers as to why they didn't put Vithabai's name in the title. Vithabai Narayangaonkar's family has also demanded that the film should be named Vitha or Vithabai, giving due recognition to the legendary folk artist. Babasaheb Patil, the state president of Maharashtra, said that it is the party's responsibility to respect and honour Vithabai's legacy and stated that the film's title should reflect Vithabai's immense contribution to Lavani and tamasha. Vithabai's sons Kailash and Rajesh, and grandson Mohit, have also asked the makers to rethink their decision. They also stated that the title Eetha made them unhappy. According to the family, while the biopic should carry her name, it should also give due credit to the woman whose efforts helped shape the Lavani tradition in Maharashtra. As of now, neither director Laxman Utekar, nor Shraddha Kapoor, nor Maddock Films has reacted to this demand.

Who is Vithabai Narayangaonkar?

A celebrated name in Maharashtra's Lavani and Tamasha tradition, Vithabai Narayangaonkar was one of the most renowned folk artists of her time. Her contribution to the folk culture was also recognized by the President of India on multiple occasions. However, Vithabai's life was filled with hardships; it is believed that she spent her final years struggling financially. Eetha's teaser starts with a group performing Lavani, as a pregnant Shraddha Kapoor screams in pain. Not caring for her life, she later goes on stage to perform. The teaser further highlights her larger-than-life presence. After Stree, Shraddha Kapoor is once again collaborating with Maddock Films for Eetha. The film also stars Randeep Hooda and Mohammad Zeeshan Ayub in important roles. It is slated to release on 28th August 2026.

Salman Khan to leave Galaxy after 52 years, gets approval for new 6-storey home



Superstar Salman Khan has been living at the Galaxy Apartments in Bandra, Mumbai, for over 50 years. The superstar and his family have been residing there since 1974; however, it's time for them to move to a new home. According to recent reports in NDTV, Salman Khan will soon have a new seaside 6-storey home in Bandra, Mumbai. As per the report, Salman Khan's new building will be built on a plot which is in his mother Salma Khan's name. Last week, it was reported that Salman Khan had received approval to construct a new six-storey residential building in Bandra. While there has been no official confirmation about the Salman's family moving out of Galaxy Apartments, it was reported that the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA) approved the construction proposal on 16th June.

Reportedly, the new building will be constructed at a short distance away from Galaxy Apartments, in Bandra's Chimbai area. The plot on which the building will be constructed is owned by Salman Khan's mother, Salma Khan.

Earlier, a two-story house stood on that plot, but it was demolished in 1956 after it became structurally unsafe. The new building includes a ground floor, still parking, and six upper floors. The total built-up area for the building will be 1014 square meters, and it will be developed by Sach Developers.

Galaxy Apartments firing incident While the Khan family's home is often spoken about as a place that welcomes all friends and loved ones, it saw a rather unfortunate incident in 2024. Bullets were allegedly fired by the Bishnoi gang at Salman Khan's home; following this, security around the premises was heightened. Salman Khan was also given Y+ security. Following the firing incident, Salman Khan had told ETimes last year that he installed bulletproof glass and other security measures, which would prevent people from climbing up the balcony and breaking into the house. He had even shared that he would sometimes find people sleeping on his balcony, which is why he covered it up. Back in 2017, Salman Khan had also shared why he loved living in a flat rather than a bungalow. He had said on one of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs's episodes, "I love staying at my flat in Bandra over a big, luxurious bungalow because my parents live in the flat above mine. Ever since I was a child, I have taken the same left turn or right turn, and I would not have it any other way. The entire building is like one big family. When we were little, all the kids from the building would play together in the garden below and sometimes even sleep there. Back then, there weren't different houses; all the houses were treated as our own, and we would go into anyone's house to eat food. I still stay in the same flat because I have countless memories attached to that house."

Harry Styles chokes, collapses briefly on stage during live concert at Wembley



Harry Styles faced a sudden health scare during his live performance at Wembley Stadium when he reportedly collapsed on stage after choking on water. The incident occurred mid-show, leaving fans in the audience visibly concerned as the singer momentarily struggled to continue performing. The incident occurred during the June 26 show, which took place amid a record-breaking heat wave in the UK. According to reports, the singer had been interacting with the crowd when he appeared to choke, prompting a brief disruption in the concert. De-

spite the alarming moment, the situation was quickly brought under control. Harry regained his composure shortly after and was able to continue with the performance, ensuring the concert carried on for the thousands of fans present at the venue. Crew members and on-site support were seen responding promptly as the singer recovered on stage. The incident has since gone viral on social media, with clips and reactions spreading rapidly online. See the clips from Harry Styles' event here: Harry Styles briefly collapsed on stage due to a choking scare, not the extreme European heatwave, TMZ reports. pic.twitter.com/YrR7tHYt8r Fans expressed relief after learning that the episode was not serious and that Harry Styles was able to continue the show without further complications. Many also praised the artist for completing the performance despite the unexpected interruption. Harry Styles returned to the stage the following evening at Wembley Stadium, continuing his performances without any visible issues after the brief on-stage incident. His next show at the venue is scheduled for June 29. The London concerts are part of his ongoing Together, Together global residency tour in support of his latest album Kiss All the Time. Disco, Occasionally. Following the Wembley run, which is set to conclude on July 4, Harry Styles will travel to São Paulo, Mexico City, and New York before wrapping up the tour in Australia on December 13.

Mallikarjun Kharge takes oath as Rajya Sabha member after re-election

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday took oath as a member of the Rajya Sabha after his re-election. The oath to Kharge was administered by Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President C P Radhakrishnan in his chamber. He took the oath in Hindi and held a copy of the Constitution in his hand. Radhakrishnan congratulated Kharge and said the Upper House would benefit from his long experience. Kharge, who represents Karnataka, later said he will continue to raise concerns, aspirations and voices of people with sincerity and conviction, which will remain his responsibility, apart from holding the government accountable. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson

Sonia Gandhi and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were present during the oath-taking. Health Minister J P Nadda, who is also a leader of the House, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh were also present on the occasion. "Vice President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, C. P. Radhakrishnan, administered the oath to Mallikarjun Kharge, Member of the Rajya Sabha (re-elected) from Karnataka at Parliament House today," the Vice President's office said on X while sharing pictures of the oath-taking. Kharge also said on X, "I had the privilege of taking the oath of office as a Member of the Council of States, again."