

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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Southern Zonal Council meet: DyCM pushes for cooperative growth

Hyderabad, August 20

At the 31st meeting of the Southern Zonal Council (SZC) in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu, on Thursday, August 20, Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka pitched for healthy competition among states along with cooperation. He spoke for a council that moves beyond discussion, towards decisions and implementation.

Union Minister for Home Amit Shah headed the SZC, which comprises Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territories of Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.



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Representing Telangana, Bhatti alluded to Mahabalipuram and said that a strong structure does not require every part to be identical; it requires every part to carry its share of the weight. He said India's federal structure should be viewed in the same spirit. "A federation is not really tested when everyone agrees; it is tested when legitimate interests collide yet a fair way forward is found," he said, adding that Telangana's approach is to seek fair, time-bound, and legally sustainable resolution of inter-state issues.

Competition to co-exist with cooperation

He said that states naturally compete over investment, industry, jobs, and talent. However, many important issues do not respect state boundaries, such as rivers, power grids, workers, and businesses. "Problems cross borders faster than government files do," he quipped.

He stressed the need to move from prolonged discussion towards final decisions and effective implementation, observing that disagreement itself is natural in a democracy; the real test is whether disagreement can be converted into a decision.

MS Degree College Admissions Admissions 2026-27

Pradhan May Return to Cabinet in Modi Reshuffle

New Delhi: Forced to quit as Union education minister amid unprecedented student protests over the NEET paper leak and growing concerns over the state of education in the country, BJP Lok Sabha



member Dharmendra Pradhan might just be on his way back to power. Amid talks of an impending reshuffle in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's team, speculation is rife that Pradhan could be offered a Cabinet berth. That the former education minister continues to be the "blue-eyed boy" of the ruling dispensation became evident from the way he was accorded a hero's welcome by the BJP MPs when he attended Parliament after his resignation.

Speaking on Krishna waters, he said Telangana does not seek a special privilege, it just wants a fair entitlement through the legal mechanisms already in place.

The allocation of Krishna waters between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is already under consideration before KWDT-II, he said.

Bhatti also sought Central support for the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme for completion of the remaining work and to make the project operational.

Bhatti noted that even 12 years after the Andhra

Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, issues between the two successor states remain unresolved. He said the state sought closure as per the Act so that both states can move forward. To that effect, he mentioned the

division of Schedule IX government companies and corporations, and the division of Schedule IX institutions, which continue to remain pending.

Telangana has already submitted its views concerning 23 Schedule IX institutions to the Ministry of Home Affairs, he pointed out, seeking an early settlement.

On bifurcation of Schedule X institutions, he said that the claims made by the Andhra Pradesh government are not supported by the Act and the matter is pending before the court.

Bhatti again sought a resolution through the legal process and in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Among the attendees were Tamil Nadu, the host state's CM, Joseph Vijay; the Karnataka CM, DK Shivakumar; the Andhra Pradesh CM, N Chandrababu Naidu; and the Kerala CM, VD Satheesan.

After the announcement of BJP president Nitin Nabin's team, which has a significant number of new faces along with some senior leaders, speculation is rife that the council of ministers could also include new faces along with some reshuffling of portfolios. Commerce minister Piyush Goyal was the only union minister appointed as the national treasurer of the BJP.

Under intense pressure from the CJP and its supporters, who had gathered at the Jantar Mantar last month, Pradhan tendered his resignation on July 25, maintaining that his decision was aimed at safeguarding the student's future. He also maintained that his decision to resign from the Cabinet was also to prevent "anti-national forces" from exploiting the nationwide protests. Two days after Pradhan's resignation, his party colleagues presented him with a ceremonial cap and escorted him inside the Parliament when he went to attend the recently concluded Monsoon Session.

With the BJP-led NDA government's efforts in passing the women's reservation amendment bill, there are talks within the ruling party that some more women leaders could also be inducted. Some of the NDA allies could also see their representative getting included in Team Modi during the reshuffle, or so claim reports.



ACB uncovers assets worth Rs 6.87 cr from Ibrahimpatnam MRO

Hyderabad, August 20

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) conducted raids at seven properties linked to the Divisional Administrative Officer on Thursday, August 20, and uncovered assets worth Rs 6.87 crore.

A case of disproportionate assets has been registered against Desani Srinivas Reddy, Tahsildar, presently working as Divisional Administrative Officer (DAO) under the office of the Revenue Divisional Office (RDO), Ibrahimpatnam, Rangareddy district, as he acquired assets by indulging in corrupt practices and dubious means during his service, ACB said.

During the searches, officials found documents for two residential flats located at Karmanghat, valued at Rs 2.6 crore and one G+3 penthouse at Karmanghat valued at Rs 1.6 crore.

Officials also found documents for a 10-acre agricultural land worth Rs 25 lakh at Nallavelly village in Yacharam mandal and eight open plots worth Rs 62 lakh in several places within the city limits and outskirts.

Srinivas Reddy also invested Rs 86 lakh in the Narendra Bar & Restaurant at Balapur in partnership with others. The market value of these properties is expected to be much higher than the official value.

Apart from documents, ACB found Rs 4 lakh cash, gold ornaments weighing 680 grams, valued at Rs 5.85 lakh, and Rs 8.6 lakh in bank deposits.

Three four-wheelers, two two-wheelers, worth Rs 59 lakh and household and electronic gadgets worth Rs 11 lakh were also found. Srinivas Reddy availed a gold loan by pledging 46 tulas of gold with the bank, ACB said.

Further verification regarding additional assets is underway.

A disproportionate assets case was previously registered against Srinivas Reddy in 2009 while he was working as the Mandal Revenue Inspector under the office of the Tahsildar in Maheshwaram mandal.

Reddy will be produced before a ACB special court in Hyderabad for judicial remand.

Telangana HC refuses to lift stay on Shaadi Mubarak scheme

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court on Thursday, August 20, refused to lift the stay on the Kalyan Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak schemes that were launched to provide financial assistance for marriage to eligible beneficiaries.

Justice NV Shruvan Kumar was hearing a writ petition filed by Advocate Vijay Gopal, challenging the legal validity of the schemes.

According to a report in the NewsMeter, the petitioner stated that the schemes were being implemented through eight government orders issued from 2014 onwards, and since framing welfare schemes and fixing eligibility criteria are essentially legislative functions, these schemes, introduced through executive orders, are arbitrary and contrary to Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution.

Additional Advocate General (AAG) Mohammed Imran Khan, appearing for the state government, was questioned on the various aspects of the implementation of these schemes and the financial obligations arising from them.



The court also directed the Finance Department to file an affidavit on the state's financial position and to explain whether any loans had been raised to continue these schemes.

The bench also expressed concern over delays in the payment of various welfare and statutory benefits, such as pending payments to land losers, beneficiaries of welfare measures, retired employees and government staff.

The AAG had brought up the matter during the post-lunch session on Wednesday as well, asking Justice NV Shruvan Kumar to hear the matter as it was an urgent one, The Hindu reported.

The AAG said that the stay was affecting beneficiaries and was creating a logjam for disbursement of funds. In response, the

judge asked why the government did not show similar interest in compensating citizens who had given up their lands for irrigation and other projects.

He asked why the state was not prioritising compensation to land losers and was only worrying about welfare schemes.

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Draft Electoral Rolls Trigger Voter Frustration In Telangana

Hyderabad, August 20

The release of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) draft electoral rolls in Telangana has left several voters frustrated, with the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Telangana Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) facing criticism over what citizens describe as a clumsy and unnecessarily difficult system for checking their names.

The draft rolls were released on Monday after the completion of the SIR exercise. The revision has

already triggered widespread concern, and yet at a time when citizens most need a simple way to check whether their names remain on the rolls, the ECI's system has made the process needlessly complicated. The biggest problem is the reliance on large PDF electoral rolls. Instead of giving citizens a straightforward, voter-friendly interface to check the newly published draft roll, the system requires them to identify their Assembly constituency, polling station and relevant part before downloading the corresponding roll.

A letter, beard & speech: How a Bareilly boy identified fraud, saved his parents from ‘digital arrest’ scam



A letter on a signage, a long beard, and speech — these are the three inconsistencies that led a 14-year-old boy in Bareilly to suspect that the men threatening his parents over a call, alleging links to terror groups, were fraudsters, and eventually save them from getting duped. The callers kept the family under what police described as “digital arrest” for nearly nine hours on April 6, during which they were not allowed to leave the house or contact anyone outside. As his parents were unwilling to accept his suspicion that the callers were fraudsters, Tanmay Saxena, a Class 7 student, took matters in his hands. He put his parents’ mobile phone — through which the threats were being issued — on flight mode, effectively cutting off all communication. The next day, after the family realised the nature of deception, they filed a police complaint at Prem Nagar Police Station, following which an FIR was registered against unidentified persons. No arrests have been made so far, police said.

Superintendent of Police, Bareilly, Manush Pareek said, “An attempt at ‘digital arrest’ has been foiled and that the family did not suffer any financial loss. A minor inconsistency initially noticed by the boy raised suspicion.” Police have been conducting regular awareness programmes in schools to educate people about such scams, he added. Speaking about what led to his suspicion, Tanmay said, “The callers claimed to be from

the National Investigation Agency, but several details did not add up.” “The signage visible behind them had ‘NIA’ written on it, but the letter ‘N’ was in lowercase, which made it evident that the caller was not at their office. The man speaking to my parents, who said he was an officer, had a long beard. Also the way they were speaking did not sound professional or convincing. These three things made me suspicious,” he said. “I repeatedly told my father that they appeared to be fraudsters, but my parents were not ready to believe me. So, late at night, when everyone was asleep, I put the phone on flight mode and cut off the conversation,” he added. Tanmay said he was aware of such scams through reports on social media and in newspapers, which helped him recognise the warning signs. Tanmay, a resident of the Prem Nagar locality in Bareilly, is the son of Sanjay Kumar, a shopkeeper who sells food items, and his wife Roshni Saxena, a private school teacher. Recalling the incident, Sanjay said that on April 6, he had closed his shop early as a cooking gas cylinder was unavailable and went home when he received a call from an unknown number. The caller identified himself as an officer from the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS).

“He told us that my wife’s mobile number had been linked to terrorists and that she was also involved in a fraud worth Rs 300 crore. We were shocked and said we had no idea how her number could be connected to any such activity, nor was she involved in any fraud,” Sanjay said. He added that the callers began issuing threats, after which another person, claiming to be from the NIA, initiated a video call and stepped up the intimidation. “He asked for our bank details. My son, who was sitting next to us, kept telling me that they were fraudsters, but I was not ready to believe him,” he said. “They effectively placed us under digital arrest, instructing us not to step outside and to remain constantly on the video call so they could monitor our movements. They also gathered details about our house and bank accounts and as a result we remained confined for nearly nine hours,” Sanjay said.

4 Pune journalists ‘on sting operation’ booked for filming a woman changing clothes in a hotel room

The Pune police on Friday booked four journalists for allegedly taking objectionable video of a woman while she was changing her clothes in a hotel room in the Budhwar Peth area. The Pune police on Friday booked four journalists for allegedly taking objectionable video of a woman while she was changing her clothes in a hotel room in the Budhwar Peth area. The Pune police on Friday booked four journalists for allegedly taking objectionable video of a woman while she was changing her clothes in a hotel room in the Budhwar Peth area of Pune city.

The police said that the accused, identified as Rohan Kadam, who worked for a television news channel, and three others, took a room on rent in Ajay Lodge in Budhwar Peth on April 8 and allegedly took a video of a woman changing her clothes in another room, claiming that they were doing a “sting operation”. The woman who noticed the inappropriate act raised an alarm and registered a First Information Report (FIR) in the case at the Vishrambag police station on Friday night. The journalists were booked under Section 77 (Capturing or sharing images of a woman where she has a reasonable expectation of pri-



vacuity), and Section 3 (5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). After the incident came to light, the Pune Union of Working Journalists (PUWJ) condemned the act of the journalists and wrote to the Commissioner of Pune City Police to take legal action against them. PUWJ office-bearers held a meeting with Deputy Commissioner of Police Krishikesh Rawale, saying the organisation does not support wrong activities of any journalists.

AI-powered tool to help Gujarat Police weed out drug menace



RAG-based tool designed to eliminate procedural gaps in narcotics cases and predict courtroom defense arguments for higher conviction rates. Gujarat Police has launched ‘NARIT AI,’ India’s first RAG-based tool designed to eliminate procedural gaps in narcotics cases and predict courtroom defense arguments for higher conviction rates. The state government on Friday said that police in Gujarat had become the first in the country to develop an artificial intelligence-driven tool that was aimed at strengthening narcotics investigation and enforcement. Named ‘NARIT AI’ (Narcotics Analysis & RAG-based Investigation Tool), it provides real-time analytical support to investigating officers, as per an official note.

According to Gujarat Police, “NARIT AI is a Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)-based system designed to assist law enforcement agencies in handling complex narcotics cases under the NDPS legal framework. By integrating legal provisions, case laws, and investigative procedures, the system provides real-time analytical support to investigating officers.” The application was developed by Western Railway police, Vadodara division, in collaboration with a Mumbai-based AI startup. The statement quoted Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi as saying, “We have adopted a ‘zero tolerance’ policy towards narcotics-related crimes and will leave no stone unturned—from registering cases to securing convictions—by using all available tools, including AI.” The application was conceptualised under the guidance of in-charge chief of the state police, DGP KLN Rao and Surat City Police Commissioner Anupam Singh Gehlot, and was initiated by Abhay Soni, Superintendent of Police (SP), Western Railway, Vadodara. The statement quoted SP Soni as saying, “Earlier, investigations were handled only by specialised police staff, which created workload and administrative delays. This tool will act as a force multiplier by leveraging the latest RAG-based AI technology and will enable every investigating officer to conduct proper, procedure-compliant investigations, thereby im-

proving the conviction rate in NDPS cases. Since the application has been developed and trained using historical cases from the high courts and the Supreme Court, Bare Acts, and government guidelines, the probability of hallucinations is minimal and procedural accuracy will be high.” “The key challenge in the investigation of NDPS cases is procedural compliance. We have seen in the past that, despite strong evidence, the accused often benefits from gaps in investigation procedures, resulting in acquittal. This application will provide a comprehensive report to every investigating officer who can refer to it while making final decisions. This will help prevent procedural gaps, improve the quality of investigations, and ultimately enhance the conviction rate in NDPS cases. Moreover, this tool can be operated by any rank police staff and easy handling of the tool ensures faster adoption of new technology,” the SP added.

Toddler drowns in pool at farmhouse in South Delhi’s Chattarpur, contractor held for negligence

Two days after a two-and-a-half-year-old boy drowned in a swimming pool at a farmhouse in South Delhi’s Chattarpur area, a contractor involved in the construction of the pool was arrested on Friday over negligence, said police. The contractor, Raj Kiran, has been apprehended as no safety measures — barricading or reflective lights — were found around the pool, according to officers. Police are also investigating the role of the owner of the pool. According to the police, the incident happened on Wednesday around 6 pm. The toddler — whose parents were working as labourers at a nearby construction site — walked towards the farmhouse to play. The toddler often played by the pool as the parents and their kin worked at nearby construction sites, said police. However, when the child did not return for about an hour, the parents began to search for him. They found his clothes near the pool and his body floating in the water, said officers. His parents came from Bihar’s Begusarai area about three months ago in search of work, and settled around the farmhouse area after getting a gig at a construction site, said police

Karnataka governor grants assent to law to prevent ‘honour killings’ in inter-caste marriages



The Karnataka government on Friday brought into force the Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the name of honour and tradition (Eva Nammava Eva Nammava) Act, 2026, intended to restrict ‘honour killings’ in inter-caste marriages after receiving Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot’s assent on April 9. The new law, which was passed unanimously by the state legislature last month, was notified in the state gazette on April 10.

The Bill was proposed by the Congress government in the wake of caste-linked ‘honour killings’ in the state, including the December 21, 2025, murder near Hubli of a 20-year-old Lingayat woman by her father for marrying a man from another caste. The phrase ‘Eva Nammava Eva Nammava’ in the title is in reference to the message of universal humanity that the Lingayat saint Basavanna espoused. Basavanna, who rebelled against the caste system to lay the foundation of the Lingayat faith system—an amalgamation of all castes—used the words meaning ‘he is a part of me’ to say all people are one. The Act prescribes punishments for discrimination against individuals on the basis of caste in inter-caste marriages of adults and also puts the onus on the state to identify instances where honour and tradition are used to impede inter-caste marriages and to provide shelters for couples facing threats over mixed marriages. ‘Violate fundamental rights’ “The persistence of caste-based discrimination in Karnataka continues to manifest in brutal forms of violence, including honour killings, particularly against young adults who exercise their constitutional right to choose their life partners through inter-caste marriages,” says the statement of objects and reasons in the law. The law states that offences like murder, assault, and criminal intimidation in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, “do not adequately address the specific social motive of pre-

serving perceived ‘caste honour’ or the wide range of coercive practices employed from performing death rituals (thithi) for living daughters, denying lawful inheritance rights, social ostracism, to insidious attempts at causing harm through poisoning or other covert means.”

“Such acts not only violate fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 of the Constitution of India but also undermine the vision of social reformers like Sree Basavanna and Dr B R Ambedkar, who advocated inter-caste marriages as a means to eradicate caste hierarchy,” it adds. The new law defines the social boycott of inter-caste couples as forcible eviction to remote corners of villages, refusal to provide services, refusal to provide work, refusal to conduct business, denial of loans and admissions to schools, and makes it punishable. In the case of ‘honour killings’ per se, the new law prescribes a minimum imprisonment of five years, and in the case of assaults, a prison term that is not less than three years for serious injury and two years for minor injuries. The law proposes a three to five year imprisonment for persons involved in intimidating and threatening inter-caste couples, while those who are part of groups that intimidate couples can face a term of six months to five years in prison. The offences under the proposed law are cognisable and non-bailable, which means police can carry out arrests without court permissions after taking up a case. In the shadow of 3 deaths Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had indicated on January 3, 2026, that the state would bring a bill to prevent ‘honour killings’ in the wake of the December 21, 2025, murder of a 20-year-old woman allegedly by her father and his relatives near Hubli. The incident took place seven months after Manya Doddamani’s family opposed her wedding. Her father and two relatives allegedly attacked her when she was working on a field at Inam Veerapur village in Dharwad district, near Hubli. The victim hailed from the Lingayat community while her husband was from a Scheduled Caste community. The murder was among the three cases of killings reported in Karnataka in 2025 over inter-caste marriages. In April 2025, a 17-year-old from the OBC Kuruba community was allegedly killed by her father at Raichur after she eloped with a boy from an SC community. In September 2025, 18-year old Kavita, from the Lingayat community, was allegedly killed by her father over her relationship with a boy from the OBC Kuruba community. The law to protect the freedom of choice in marriages is among several social bills that the Congress government has brought out in line with its policies for the backward and down-trodden communities in the state.

Bengaluru’s Peenya elevated flyover to close for 4 days: Here are the alternative routes you can take

Bengaluru’s Peenya flyover will be closed for load testing from April 13 to 17. Plan your commute with these traffic diversions and NH-4 alternative routes. Peenya Flyover in Bengaluru will close April 13–17 for NHAI load testing. Check the latest traffic diversions and alternative routes for NH-4 commuters here. The Bengaluru traffic police announced on Friday that the Peenya elevated flyover on National Highway-4 will be shut for four days, from April 13 to April 17, to facilitate load testing of the flyover bridge by the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) following recent cable repair work. “The cable repair works on the Peenya Elevated Flyover (Dr. Sri Shivakumar Swamiji Flyover) on National Highway-4, under the limits of Peenya Traffic Police Station, have been completed. In order to ensure the structural integrity of the flyover, final load testing is required to be carried out,” the traffic police said in a statement. “In this regard, based on the request received from the National Highways Authority, traffic movement of all types of vehicles will be temporarily restricted on the Peenya Elevated Flyover from 5 am on April 13 to 11 am on April 17,” the statement said.

The traffic restrictions will apply to all vehicles on the flyover, from the Kennametal Widia Upper Ramp to



SRS Down Ramp and from the CMTI Junction to the Parle-G toll booths. The alternative routes suggested by the traffic police are as follows: 1. Nelamangala ? Bengaluru bound traffic: Divert at Kennametal Widia Via NH-4 (below flyover) & service road ? 8th Mile ? Dasarahalli ? Jalahalli Cross ? Peenya Police Station Junction ? SRS Junction ? Goraguntepalya.

Two men sleeping in plot in Rohini killed as large stones being moved by crane fall on them, driver held



Two men, sleeping on a vacant plot in Northwest Delhi’s Rohini area, were killed in the early hours of Friday after large stones being moved by a crane at a nearby construction site fell on them. The bodies were found in a pool of blood on the plot near Green Aura Banquet Hall in Rohini’s Sector-10, police said. The crane has been seized and the driver of the crane, identified as Rajgir Singh, a resident of Shalimar Bagh, has been apprehended, said officers.

According to the Delhi Police, information was received at Prashant Vihar police station on Friday regard-

ing two unconscious persons lying near the banquet hall. A police team rushed to the spot and found both men critically injured. The deceased are yet to be identified. However, it is believed that they were ragpickers. Both of them were rushed to BSA Hospital, where doctors declared them brought dead. The crime team and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) team inspected the scene and collected evidence. A crane bearing a Haryana registration number found nearby was also seized as part of the investigation, officers said.

Police recorded the statement of an eyewitness, identified as Rohit Kumar, a resident of Muzaffarpur district in Bihar. Based on his statement, a case under relevant sections of law has been registered at PS Prashant Vihar. “While shifting the heavy stones using the crane, some of them accidentally fell on the victims, resulting in their deaths,” the officer said. Police said the accused was apprehended from the spot. During questioning, it emerged that he was unaware that the victims were sleeping nearby when he began clearing the debris. The bodies have been preserved at the mortuary of Dr BSA Hospital for a post-mortem examination, and efforts are underway to establish the identity of the deceased.

Mixed response to 2BHK housing shop auctions in Rangareddy from bidders

Hyderabad: The Housing Department’s auction of commercial shops in double bedroom housing society complexes across Rangareddy district received a mixed response from bidders. Auctions were conducted at eight housing society locations. While four locations saw encouraging participation, the remaining four fell short of officials’ expectations. A total of 92 shops were put up for auction at Thatiannaram, Hattiguda, Thimmaiguda and Abdullapur on Thursday. However, only 30 shops were successfully sold. Officials said that although these complexes have good road connectivity, they are located away from main roads. This may have discouraged bidders. “The department will take a decision on auction-

ing the remaining 60 shops in these areas,” an official said. Successful bidders must pay the bid amount within one month, failing which their earnest money deposit will be forfeited. In contrast, auctions at Mankhal-II, Mansanpally I and II, Narsingi and Shankarpally saw strong demand on Friday. All 79 shops in Shankarpally were sold, with bids ranging from Rs 6,000 to Rs 8,000 per square foot, well above the upset price of Rs 2,200 per square foot. Similarly, all 35 shops at Mankhal and 10 shops at Narsingi were sold. At Narsingi, bids ranged between Rs 10,000 and Rs 14,000 per square foot, against an upset price of Rs 5,500. At Mansanpally, 39 out of 57 shops were sold.

‘Can’t fill the form... help us’: Race against time for BLOs in East Delhi where digitisation average is among the worst



With just 13.81% of forms digitised, East Delhi is among the worst performing districts in the Capital in terms of digitising the enumeration forms filled out by electors as the Election Commission holds the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in the city. Digitisation average across districts in Delhi is pegged at around 21%, according to the data provided by the Chief Electoral Office (CEO).From unnumbered houses, confusing addresses to an average elector's inability to fill the form — booth level officers or BLOs in the East Delhi district say that they are facing a race against time to make sure no eligible electors are left out.The Election Commission of India earlier this week extended the deadline for the ongoing door-to-door visits to August 8, giving BLOs more time to distribute and collect enumeration forms in Delhi.

It's a humid July afternoon. As Vivek Kumar, an English teacher and BLO of Mangal Bazaar's Block F in East Delhi, enters the street where he is supposed to distribute enumeration forms, he seeks help from passersby to locate the addresses on his list.Delhi SIR Vivek Kumar, an English teacher, is working as a BLO of Mangal Bazaar's Block F in East Delhi.As he enters one of the houses, he sifts through hundreds of enumeration forms in his backpack. He puts his register, in which he notes all necessary details, and other stuff on the floor.

Explaining the process to the residents, he gives a suggestion, "Please get the forms photocopied so that you can make mistakes." Most enumeration forms he gets, he adds, are riddled with mistakes. To place the

residents of the house, he scans the list — the woman in the house is on Page 18 of his list, while her son is on Page 31. Around 45 minutes have passed and they realise that the woman's husband is assigned to another BLO.Eyes on the list, Vivek is explaining to another resident on a call on how to find his father's details on the Election Commission Information Network or ECINET app. Multitasking has become necessary during hectic routines. He packs his stuff and makes way to the next home. Annie Gomes, the next elector on the list, is not at her house, and the neighbours are not sure if she lives here or not. "We get a lot of such cases where the owner of the house has moved, but their vote is still registered here," says Vivek.Around 10 km away is the Chilla Village near the Yamuna. A foul stench pervades the entire colony as open drains remain clogged with garbage. BLO Vinay Kumar is also facing a slew of challenges. As he knocks on the door of the house of 55-year old Brahm Chand to collect the form he had given a couple days back, the resident gives a confused look. "Humse nahi bhara jaave form, to bharde humara. (We are not able to fill this... you please fill on our behalf)."

A tired Vinay sits inside the house and ends up spending more than 30 minutes as he fills the forms of the family of five. The 31-year old explains that most people in the village don't have fixed addresses. "While villagers might know each other, so many people are tenants. Sometimes, 15 families are renting out different rooms in one house... it gets very confusing," Vinay says, adding he has to fill out the forms of most people since they don't know how to read or write. Next, he goes and sits at the verandah of the house — a lot of people come to clear doubts. "If I can't place myself on electoral rolls, will I be sent to Bangladesh?" asks 60-year old Anisha Khatum, who has a voter ID, but is not able to find herself or any relative in the 2002 electoral list. A neighbour tells her not to worry. She can show her widower's pension slip when she is sent a notice, she is told.An election official explains, "In areas like Chilla Village and Kotla Village, a lot of the electors are labourers who are uneducated and don't understand the process. Also, many of them don't have any proof of where their parents lived since they even moved around and lived on rent."

2 minor cousins' underage pregnancies trigger Karnataka Pocso probe



Two minors from the same family in Karnataka's Hubballi-Dharwad district were found to be victims of separate instances of sexual assault, leading to underage pregnancies. The Hubballi-Dharwad police on Friday launched a comprehensive investigation into the cases.The investigation was launched after a 15-year-old girl conceived for the second time within a year of delivering her first child. This incident follows closely on the heels of a separate case last week involving her 14-year-old cousin, who delivered a baby at home under highly suspicious circumstances, the police said.

According to a complaint filed on Thursday by an officer with the Dharwad District Child Protection Unit, the 15-year-old girl was forcefully taken by the accused, Karim, to an abandoned area near a railway station, where she was allegedly sexually assaulted multiple times between July and August 2025.

Following the assault, the girl conceived and received medical treatment from a practitioner in a village, as well as at a private hospital, eventually delivering a baby. The Dharwad District Child Protection Unit has alleged that the girl's parents subsequently gave the newborn away to an unknown party.In May 2026, the minor was allegedly subjected to sexual assault by the same accused, resulting in her second pregnancy within a year.Speaking to the media, District Child Protection Officer Prakash Kodliwad stated that after receiving infor-

mation regarding the minor's pregnancy, officials visited her home and school to verify her age, confirming she is under 18. While the family claims that the newborn was given away, authorities strongly suspect foul play. "We suspect that the child was sold or trafficked," Kodliwad said.The police are also verifying the parents' claim that the newborn is with a relative. "The parents have claimed that the newborn was unwell and is currently with a relative in Karwar for treatment. We are verifying that claim as well," a senior police officer said.The Dharwad District Child Protection Unit has demanded stringent action against those involved. Legal action has been demanded against both the village doctor and the medical staff at the private hospital for failing to report the sexual abuse of a minor to law enforcement.Consequently, the police have registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, naming Karim, the survivor's parents, the village doctor, and the doctors at the private hospital.The previous case

The current investigation unfolded under the shadow of a separate case reported last week in the locality. On July 8, the survivor's 14-and-a-half-year-old cousin sister delivered a baby at her residence, the police said. She was later rushed to the Karnataka Medical College and Research Institute due to severe postpartum bleeding and trauma.Investigations into this case revealed she was allegedly abducted and confined to a room a year ago, where she was repeatedly sexually assaulted. Her parents allegedly hid the pregnancy.

The hospital later alerted the police, and a Pocso case was registered on July 11.Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar confirmed that both survivors are from the same family. "Currently, both are out of danger but are not in a position or willing to give any statements. We are allowing them time to recover."Shashikumar added that notices have already been issued to the family members as police actively map out the timeline and systemic failures that allowed these crimes to occur. "A comprehensive investigation is underway as several aspects of the case remain unclear, he said.

‘Hardest part was starting all over again’: Jalandhar lad shoots into glory with AIR 8

For Geetansh Sarin, the toughest challenge wasn't cracking one of India's toughest competitive entrance examinations, but beginning all over again.Like lakhs of medical aspirants, this Jalandhar lad had spent months preparing for NEET that was mired in controversy and subsequently cancelled, leaving him and others disappointed and drained mentally."It was difficult to cope up with. I had prepared on my own for months and then.... It wasn't easy to push myself to begin all over again," Geetansh told The Indian Express.Defying the setback, the 18-year-old gradually regained his confidence and fired on all cylinders with renewed determination and zeal, only to shoot into glory — securing All India Rank (AIR) 8 in the NEET-UG 2026, with 705 out of 720 marks, and becoming Punjab's second-highest scorer and the topper from Jalandhar district.For Geetansh, the rank is "not just a personal milestone, but fulfillment of a childhood ambition"."There has never been a doctor in my family. I always wanted to become the first one," he said.Born in a family of educators, Geetansh credits discipline, more than long study hours, to his success.

His parents Monika and Sunit Sarin are government school teachers, and his elder brother is pursuing engineering. The parents say the NEET cancellation not only tested their son's resilience, but also their patience. "It was a difficult phase, but he never complained. He accepted the situation and started preparing again," his fa-



ther said.Knowing that consistency would matter more than anything else, Geetansh made another decision long before the examination.Since Class XI, Geetansh stayed away from social media. "I knew it would only distract me, because every hour counts during preparation," he said.Rather than chasing marathon study sessions, he focused on a disciplined routine built around concept clarity, revision, mock tests and analysing mistakes.Geetansh now hopes to pursue medicine and eventually specialise in either cardiology or neurology.Looking back, he said, "You cannot control every situation in life. What you can control is how you respond to it. Once I accepted that, preparing again became easier."

Join new scheme today or face the axe: Punjab to 2,000 rural employment staff

Escalating its stance against the ongoing strike by over 2,000 contractual employees engaged under the now-defunct Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Punjab government has warned that those who refuse to join duty under the newly launched Viksit Bharat-Guaranteee-Rozgar Aajeevika Mission-Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) by July 18, Saturday, will have their contracts terminated.The Viksit Bharat-Guaranteee-Rozgar Aajeevika Mission-Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) came into force on July 1, bringing down the curtains on the two-decade-old MGNREGS. Consequently, contractual employees working under MGNREGS are required to execute fresh contracts before being deployed under the new project.The employees' union, however, has decided not to join duty on Saturday and instead stage another protest outside the house of Rural Development and Panchayats (RDP) Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond at Khanna on Monday.

The Additional Project Commissioner, Department of Rural Development and Panchayats, on Friday directed all deputy commissioners-cum-chief district programme coordinators and additional deputy commissioners to terminate the contracts of employees who fail to sign fresh agreements under the VB-G-RAM-G project. The department has also circulated a draft termination order along with a sample contract to be executed with employees joining the new scheme.The order, issued with reference to an earlier communication dated July 10, said that district authorities had failed to act despite clear directions to initiate action against employees whose non-joining or non-performance was adversely affecting implementation of the new scheme. It said no district had taken the required action so far.Under VB-G-RAM-G, every job card holder will now get 125 days of employment per annum, instead of 100 days.The order also reiterated instructions issued on July 10 that employees under the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) should be assigned additional responsibilities under the VB-G-RAM-G project. These include generating muster rolls, monitoring development works and carrying out other project-related duties. It added that separate instructions regarding payment for the additional work would be issued, while technical duties would be assigned to junior engineers of the panchayati raj department.Over 2,000 MGNREGS contractual employees have been protesting since June 1 over non-payment of wages for more than five months and demanding regularisation of their services in the Rural Development and Panchayats Department. The



employees were earlier responsible for logistics operations, field management and implementation of MGNREGS and are now proposed to be deployed under the VB-G-RAM-G project.Reacting to the government's warning, the MGNREGA Workers Union Punjab accused the state government of threatening employees instead of addressing their long-pending demands."We have not received salaries for more than five months, and our demand for regularisation has also remained pending. On July 15, our members were lathi-charged while marching towards the residence of Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond. Several protesters were injured, and one worker suffered a fractured leg. Now, instead of resolving our issues, the government is threatening to terminate us," said union patron Varinder Singh.

Varinder Singh said the union would hold a massive protest along with workers' families outside Minister Sond's residence in Khanna on July 20."On one hand, the government claims to be creating employment opportunities, while on the other it is threatening to terminate contractual employees who have been working for nearly 18 years on meagre salaries," Varinder Singh alleged.Gursewak Singh, union president, said, "On July 15, the minister had met us at Khanna and assured us that our file for the regularisation process will be sent to the government, after following the due process. In addition to this, they agreed to give us wages as per a pay scale rather than a lump sum. On July 17, the department issued a warning letter. So the minister is playing a dual game. We all have decided not to join duties and stage another dharna outside the minister's house on Monday."The ongoing strike has also affected employment generation under the newly launched VB-G-RAM-G scheme.

Punjab police officer arrested in FBI-linked extortion case tied to gangster probe

police officer arrestAfter the police officer's name surfaced in the international investigation, the Punjab Police had removed him from field duties. A departmental inquiry found prima facie evidence against the then SHO of Tanda police station.A former station house officer (SHO) of Punjab's Tanda police station, who had publicly claimed to have cracked the murder of an AAP worker, was arrested late on Friday in connection with an extortion case linked to an international investigation by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).The action against the police officer, Gurinderjit Singh Nagra, follows revelations made during the FBI-led Operation Hard Ball — a joint investigation involving law enforcement agencies from the United States and Canada into the overseas operations of gangster networks allegedly linked to Lawrence Bishnoi and Jaggu Bhagwanpuria. Investigators also released a photograph purportedly showing him with alleged gang associates.

After Nagra's name surfaced in the international investigation, the Punjab Police had removed him from field duties. A departmental inquiry found prima facie evidence against Nagra, the then SHO of Tanda police station.Just two months ago, the officer had claimed to have cracked the murder of an AAP worker and hardware trader — Balwinder Singh Satkartar, an AAP worker and hardware businessman — in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district on January 15. Soon after the killing in Tanda, gangsters Jashan Gill and Gurlal Khokhar claimed responsibility for the murder through social media posts.US authorities alleged that an Indian police officer was involved in an attempt to extort \$400,000 from a family living in the United States by exploiting a murder investigation in Punjab. The officer was identified as Gurinderjit Singh Nagra.The allegations surfaced during coordinated raids conducted on July 10, when agencies in the US, Canada and Europe targeted transnational organised crime networks.Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Navin Singla marked him to the police lines and assigned Superintendent of Police Vineet Ahlawat to conduct the probe. A case has been registered under extortion and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act.The allegations of extortion are rooted in the investigation into the murder of Satkartar, who was shot dead by three motorcycle-borne assailants in Miami village of Tanda on January 15, 2026. During the investigation, the police identified the alleged shooters and



brought them on production warrants for questioning.

On May 24, then SHO Nagra addressed a press conference claiming the investigation had established that the murder was the result of a family dispute.He alleged that Charanjit Singh, a retired assistant sub-inspector settled in the United States and the father-in-law of the deceased's daughter, had orchestrated the killing over a matrimonial dispute involving his daughter. The police claimed the shooters had been hired to execute the murder.However, US investigators have alleged that after Charanjit Singh and his family were named in the murder case, they were allegedly contacted by individuals linked to the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria network, who demanded \$400,000 in exchange for ensuring relief in the investigation and preventing further legal action.According to US authorities, members of the gangster network allegedly gathered information about the family in America, passed it on to their contacts in India and then attempted to use the murder case to extort money.US Attorney Bilal A "Bill" Essayli has alleged that some Indian police officers were also involved in the conspiracy and specifically named Nagra among those suspected of facilitating the extortion attempt.Naveon Singla, DIG, Jalandhar Range, confirmed his arrest in corruption and other charges.The Punjab Police have not yet disclosed whether additional arrests are likely in the case. They said the investigation is continuing to determine the extent of the alleged nexus between organised crime networks and those accused in the extortion case.

Cake, Spider-Man and barricade breach: Jharkhand exam protest takes Gen-Z turn

Ranchi: As the agitation over irregularities in recruitment examinations intensified in Jharkhand, protesting students adopted unique Gen Z-style demonstrations outside the state Assembly on Monday, with one group organising a sarcastic cake-cutting ceremony to mark Chief Minister Hemant Soren's birthday, while another protester appeared dressed as Spider-Man, drawing attention through social media memes.

The students marched towards the Assembly premises despite heightened security arrangements in the area as their protest over alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations continued. Police carried out a lathi charge and deployed water cannons after the protesters moved closer to the Assembly.Water cannons were used after the protesting students breached multiple barricades put up by the security personnel and continued their march towards the Assembly.Despite the powerful jets of water being directed at them, several protesters were seen dancing and continuing to raise slogans.Meanwhile, the state police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested former Jharkhand Public Service Commission's (JPSC) Chairman L. Kiangte in connection with the case.Amid the tense situation outside the Assembly, unique visuals also emerged as students gathered near the Assembly gates and organised a cake-cutting ceremony to mark Chief Minister Soren's birthday. The gesture was presented as a sarcastic form of protest, as the

students linked the celebration to their demands over the disputed recruitment examinations.

"Today is our Hemu Chacha's birthday, so we will celebrate his birthday. Since he is hiding, we will celebrate his happiness and birthday here. In return gift, we demand the cancellation of all the exams which faced irregularities, CBI probe and fulfilment of our other demands," a protesting student said.Another student arrived at the protest dressed as Spider-Man and explained that the costume was part of what he described as a Gen-Z style of demonstrating against the government."Since we are Gen Z, our way of protesting is a little different. That is why I have perhaps come here dressed as Spider-Man today. Perhaps our voice is not reaching the government properly. We have protested peacefully so far. We will also make every effort here to continue our protest peacefully and get our demands fulfilled," the student told IANS.During the march towards the Vidhan Sabha, another protesting student took a sarcastic jibe at the state government by referring to 'Hariya', a traditional tribal drink, and said that if the government wanted to sell something, it should sell the local beverage rather than examination papers.Speaking to IANS, the student, holding a placard 'Hariya becho, exam nahi', said: "Hariyaa (a traditional rice-based fermented drink) is a major product of our state, and we offer it to our God.

EYE SECRETS
Editorial

Caste census exercise gets tricky

The government's decision to use an open-ended format for the caste census, to be conducted alongside the population enumeration phase of the Census 2027, is fraught with complex problems. The open-ended format for recording people's responses to the question of caste, rather than a drop-down menu of castes, poses a tricky challenge: converting millions of individual responses into reliable, standardised caste data without altering what respondents have reported. As per the plan, the enumerators will simply ask people to state their caste and record the answer verbatim, without attempting to classify surnames, sub-castes or other responses into broader caste categories. Population enumeration, along with the caste census, will be conducted across the country in February. This methodology is expected to create massive data processing hurdles, risks generating millions of unverified distinct entries, and leaves the state vulnerable to accusations of arbitrarily standardising or altering raw public responses. Without a restricted list, respondents may report sub-castes, clans, or regional variations verbatim. The open-ended method was exactly how the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted. The exercise failed to produce usable caste data largely because of poor data quality, the absence of a standardised caste registry and flaws in operational design. Since respondents could self-report caste names without verification, the exercise generated an administrative nightmare. The final dataset contained nearly 46.7 lakh distinct caste names, compared with the 4,147 castes recorded in the last comprehensive caste census in 1931. The Centre eventually withheld the raw caste data.

The government's justification for the open-ended format is that it is the only way to conduct the exercise without the state itself becoming an arbiter of caste identities. Creating a dropdown menu would create a situation in which the state participates in unreliable data, it is argued. When the British first started counting India's population in 1881, caste data was included in the information gathered. For the next half-century, the decennial censuses collected caste information. After Independence, the government decided to avoid the question of caste in the census, only counting Scheduled Castes and Tribes. How castes will be listed is a thorny political question, given that the Centre and States have differing, and often contentious, OBC lists. Linguistic and regional diversity in caste names, splitting of castes and subcastes over time, and disagreements over whether specific castes fit into SC, OBC, or general categories, are likely to complicate the process. Religion adds another factor to the mix, with questions about how non-Hindu groups will be recognised and whether they will get benefits on the basis of the caste census.

Bengaluru's Skye Lounge restaurant shut, 45kg rotten meat, food found

Bengaluru food safety raid, Bengaluru restaurants raid, Skye UB City raid, Skye Lounge Bengaluru, Bengaluru food safety inspection, rotten meat Bengaluru restaurant, Karnataka FSDA raid, UB City food safety, expired food Bengaluru, Bengaluru restaurant raid, food safety violations Bengaluru, 132 kg food seized, Bengaluru food safety crackdown, Karnataka food safety department, Indian express newsBesides Skye, officials also raided Royal Chain Hotel, Madras Kitchen, Tescon Hotel, and Sanchez Hotel. (Express Photo/Special Arrangement)The kitchen of Skye Lounge at Bengaluru's UB City was shut down after Karnataka food safety officials found 45 kg of rotten meat, mouldy food, and expired dairy products during a raid Sunday, as authorities stepped up inspections of high-end restaurants across the city.Officials from the Karnataka Food Safety and Drug Administration (FSDA) said 132 kg of food articles and 15 litres of used cooking oil were also seized or discarded during raids at five establishments.According to officials, Skye, the 16th-floor rooftop restaurant, was found to have an unhygienic kitchen, with rotten meat, expired milk and curds, and other food items which were unfit for consumption.During the inspection at Skye, officials found 45 kg of rotten meat, 6 kg of rotten vegetable cutlets, and 15 litres of used cooking oil, all of which were found to be unfit for consumption. "The meat and beef were rotten with fungus. The milk and curds had expired 10 days ago. The food articles were found unfit for consumption and discarded or destroyed as per procedure," an official said.The Sunday inspections were part of a wider special drive by FSDA, along with civic officials, to check food storage, kitchens, and other facilities operated by food business operators across Bengaluru Urban district and areas under other city corporations.Besides Skye, officials raided Royal Chain Hotel, Madras Kitchen, Tescon Hotel, and Sanchez Hotel Sunday.Officials said they found serious lapses in food storage at several establishments. "The meat in some of the hotels we visited was in a rotten state. In one place, it had been kept in cold storage for more than six months. Fish can be stored for up to a month, but at one restaurant, it had been kept for more than a year," an official said.Notices have been issued to establishments found violating food safety norms, while samples of expired food materials have been sent to laboratories for testing. Most of the seized items were destroyed, officials said. They also said that some establishments attempted to conceal manufacturing and expiry dates during the inspections.At Royal Chain Hotel, 50 kg of duck and 5 kg of fish were seized.

Greater Bengaluru Authority releases penalty rules



The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) on Monday released a list of penalties that would be imposed under the 'Freedom from Waste' campaign after August 15.Releasing the list, GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao said, "All owners of vacant plots in the city must clean their sites by August 15 and dispose of the waste at the designated locations identified by the city corporations. If necessary, they may also avail the services of service providers notified by the respective city corporations for cleaning purposes."

"If vacant sites are not cleaned even after August 15, the GBA will clear the waste/debris itself, and the cleaning cost along with the waste transportation cost will be recovered from the site owners concerned," he added.The

GBA also sought public support for the campaign and said residents can send photos of vacant plots filled with debris, vegetation, or other waste, along with GPS coordinates, to the WhatsApp number 9448197197. "We will protect the identity of the informant," the civic body said.

What are the fines?

According to GBA, the fine for not cleaning a 600 sq feet vacant plot without a compound wall is Rs 6,700; and the amount for plots with a compound wall will go up to Rs 7,700. If the waste/debris transportation charges are applied, the figure would be an extra Rs 19,200. For 1200 sq feet plots, the cleaning fine would be Rs 13,400 (without a compound wall), and Rs 14,400 (with a compound wall). The transportation cost for such plots has been fixed at Rs 38,400.On July 14, Bengaluru Urban Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda set the August 15 deadline after meeting officials of all five city corporations under the GBA, which has identified 1,616 locations with debris of about 22,732 tonnes.What does the law say?According to Solid Waste Management Bye-law 18(1)(a)(ii), 2020, if a person has been issued notice for not cleaning his vacant plot, the civic agency has the right to enter the premises and clear the waste and recover from the person the expenditure incurred in having done so.Section 285(2) of the Greater Bengaluru Governance Act, 2024, empowers the city corporations under GBA to clear waste, debris, or unmanaged garbage from vacant plots and recover the cost of removal directly from the property owner along with their property tax.

'I feel free, like I'm flying': Inside Delhi's growing skating scene



Runners in full gear jog past in twos and threes. Cyclists in full kit — helmets, glasses, gloves — glide past an elderly couple on their early morning walk. A small group of children skate off toward the east end, wheels rattling faintly against the road, the clatter rising and fading as they cut around a paver joint.Clustered near the yellow police barricades are 30-odd people in knee pads and windbreakers, some with speakers in their hand playing a mix of English pop and Hindi film songs.These are the members of the Delhi Skating Community (DSC).

They stretch before the day's run, the occasional test-push of a board sending a short, hollow rumble across the empty road.By 6.30, the group is moving. Roller skaters go first, arching up the long incline toward Rashtrapati Bhavan, the smooth hiss of their wheels breaking into short scrapes each time someone leans into a turn.delhi skating Some of the skaters are members of the Delhi Skating Community (DSC), which was started in 2022 by lawyer Nischal Singh. (Express Photo by Abhinav Saha)Among them is 18-year-old Khwahish Sahni, a biomedical engineering student from Mehrauli. She found DSC on Instagram after years of an on and off relationship with skating. Her mother brought her first pair of skating shoes when she was four, but she did not continue for long.But when she wanted to start roller skating again in seventh grade, the pandemic hit and she was forced to practice smaller tricks on her terrace. "I found this community on Instagram, two years ago... I was a shy person, but this place has made me an extrovert," she says.

From one skater to a communityThe community's founder, Nischal Singh, a lawyer from a small village in Uttarakhand, says it started when he began posting videos on Instagram of himself roller-skating alone in Khan Market. His followers began asking how he had learned to skate.In 2022, he formed DSC after realising that many people were interested in skating but did not have a community to learn with or join.Nischal says he vets every member personally. "There is a Google form that one has to fill in order to register to attend our sessions... I screen them for their intent the way universities screen application essays. I ask them what they will bring to the community."

Safety is non-negotiable, he says. "I want this to be a safe space for every woman and child who wants to come here."The community is also involved in projects like Rolling Hearts, where Nischal and a group of volunteers teach skating to children at shelters.Among the day's skaters

are Ramsha and her brother Daniel as their father, Mohd. Furquan Saifi, (60), looks on.

Saifi, who is from Meerut, has been skating since he was a young boy. "I discovered the sport during a vacation to Nainital, when I saw someone skate. I liked it, and felt I should learn too. After that, I started skating at the junior level," he says.Nearby, 5-year-old Kaira Verma wobbles along the flat stretch before lifting herself up and coming to a stop. Her mother, Deepika, watches from the sidelines, making sure she is alright.Having discovered the sport at school barely two months ago, she is one of the community's newest and smallest recruits.Sneha Singh, a 20-year-old journalism student, has travelled 60 km from Sonipat by metro and auto-rickshaw just to skate. "I travel for 1.5 hours to only skate for about an hour here. But it's worth it... I like skating because it feels like I'm flying, I am free," she says on what keeps her coming back.15 km away in Sainik Farms, Saket, is Backyard Skatepark — an open-roofed private facility of ramps, rails and banks built on family land.Its founder, 20-year-old Siddhant Dhankar, started skateboarding in 2019. In November 2021, he opened the park with his father, who has also taken part in several national-level competitions. "We saw that there was a lack of proper skating facilities in Delhi and all over India, and decided to build this place from the scratch," Siddhant says, adding that brand shoots, sponsorships and events bring the community commercial visibility it never gets.Coaching the children is Akash Kumar, 28, who left a government job for skateboarding in 2018 after discovering it as "a hobby" that became "an adrenaline rush".Certified by the Roller Skating Federation of India, he now coaches students aged three and a half to sixty-five.One of his students, 8-year-old Seher, comes running to him. She tugs at his sleeves and asks, "Can I go drink water?" to which he nods.Right after that, she comes running back asking, "What should I do next?"Siddhant's younger brother, 15-year-old Naitik Dhankar, is also a national medallist — he competed in China earlier in April for the Asian Skateboarding Championship 2026. He won a bronze medal in 58th National Roller Skating Championship 2020-21."I got to learn a lot of tricks that I used to only see on my phone... seeing them in real life," Naitik says of competing abroad. "But we still have miles to go."

A skate scene with nowhere to skateAcross town in Neb Sarai, Surjeet Kumar has run the Delhi Skateboarding Academy, the city's oldest, since 2016, after noticing the sport thriving abroad while it remained "almost non-existent" at home.His academy has trained roughly a thousand skaters and produced four skateboarders who represented India at this year's Asian championship in China.Yet in Delhi, there is not one public skate park, while Chandigarh, Pune, Mumbai and Bengaluru all have one.Noting how the government's sports schemes still don't recognise skateboarding, despite its Olympic status since Tokyo 2020, he says, "The skating scene in Delhi is a little disorganised. Because we don't have public places to skate, people skate in parks, on the metro station, on roads... a lot of people do it just for fun, but then they get chased away either by the police, people, or even street dogs.""There is a need for proper public infrastructure for a community that is only growing," he adds.Back at Kartavya Path, the cloud cover starts to thin.

Supreme Court to hear Ram temple donation embezzlement pleas on August 17

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday said it would hear on August 17 a batch of petitions seeking a court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was apprised by a lawyer that Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who has been appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, has gone to the United Nations for a function.

Earlier in the day, the top court agreed to consider the request by the counsel for the Uttar Pradesh government to defer the hearing on these pleas.On July 27, the top court took note of the setting up of a four-member SIT headed by IGP Kiran S to probe alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple.It had asked the Uttar Pradesh government to also include a forensic auditor in the probe team.

Observing that "remedial actions will have to be taken", the bench had said steps will be taken to "ensure transparency".The bench had also directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to submit a status report in two weeks.On July 20, the bench had asked the Uttar Pradesh government to apprise it of the possibility of setting up an

SIT to probe the alleged embezzlement of donations.It had asked the solicitor general to take instructions on whether the SIT, which had examined the entire issue before the registration of the FIR, could be entrusted with the responsibility to probe the case instead of the local police."Just a word of caution. Please don't politicise the issue. The courts are not a place for politics. It is a simple case of commission of crime. We are (here) just to ensure a proper investigation," the CJ had said.Investigation is going on and eight persons have been arrested, the law officer had said, adding that he cannot divulge much.

On July 13, the bench had directed the Uttar Pradesh Police to submit a status report in the matter.It had also issued a notice to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on pleas seeking a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged donation theft.Narendra Kumar Goswami, one of the three petitioners, moved the top court seeking a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter.He also sought an audit of the finances of the Trust, which manages the affairs of the Ram temple, by the Comptroller and Auditor

Surat Civil Hospital doctor found dead in hostel room, high-level panel begins probe



Health Minister Praful Pansheriya said the state government had formed a high-level committee to probe the incident. The panel was asked to submit its report within 24 hours, he added.

Harsh Pandya, a 30-year-old from Modasa in Aravalli, was found dead by his colleagues who had gone to check on him when he didn't report for duty, according to officials. Pandya was a first-year resident doctor at the hospital's microbiology department. "All aspects, including whether the doctor faced any form of ragging or other mental or physical harassment by any individual or authority, of the case will be thoroughly investigated. Statements of all fellow students and resident doctors who reside in the hostel will be recorded on Sunday night," Pansheriya stated.The inquiry committee is led by the medical college's dean, Dr Jayesh M Brahmabhatt, and Hospital Superintendent Dr Parul Vadgama.

"To ensure complete transparency, Additional Director of Medical Education Dr Jayesh Sachde is directly supervising the entire inquiry. The committee members will take statements of the doctor's colleagues, faculty members, and seniors. If the investigation finds any instance of ragging, mental harassment or negligence, strict legal and administrative action will be taken against the people responsible," Pansheriya told

Meanwhile, the health minister spoke to the doctor's father, who is also a practicing doctor in Modasa, and assured the family strict action.Khatodara police are investigating the case. While the preliminary investigation did not reveal much, police suspect it to be a case of suicide. Though there is little chance for it to be a case of murder, we are probing all angles. Along with a panel postmortem, a forensic autopsy has been ordered. The postmortem report, which is expected tomorrow, will confirm the time of his death, though he was found dead in the morning," Pansheriya told this paper.

After 21 years, businessman held guilty of altering Rs 5-lakh cheque to Rs 2.51 crore



According to prosecution records, the accused requested a hand loan from Paul, who issued a UCO Bank cheque for Rs 5 lakh in the accused's name, dated March 11, 2005. In her haste, Paul left the space meant for writing the amount in words blank.

Pune Crime Files Cheque forgeryPune cheque forgery case ends after 21 years as court sentences businessman to two years for attempting to alter a Rs 5 lakh cheque

Nearly 21 years after a forgery case was registered, a Pune court in June this year sentenced a businessman to two years of imprisonment for attempting to swindle Rs 2.51 crore by tampering with a Rs 5 lakh hand-loan cheque.Judicial Magistrate (First Class) N S Bari passed the order convicting R P Banwari, a Karnataka resident now in his 60s, under charges of fraud, breach of trust, and document forgery.

Complainant Cecilia Anthony Paul filed the FIR in this case at the Yerwada police station in April 2005. Paul, who ran a construction firm and died about a decade ago, had engaged in business with the accused as he held the original general power of attorney for a land development project in Pune's Mangalwar Peth.According to prosecution records, the accused requested a hand loan from Paul, who issued a UCO Bank cheque for Rs 5 lakh in the accused's name, dated March 11, 2005. In her haste, Paul left the space meant for writing the amount in words blank.The accused allegedly wrote "Two crores fifty one lakh only" in the blank space. He also tampered with the numerical value of "Rs 5,00,000" by inserting a "2" before and a "1" after the digit "5", altering the amount to "Rs 2,51,00,000".Detecting suspicious alterations, the bank refused to honour the cheque and issued a return memo on April 2, 2005. After discovering the fraud, Paul lodged a police complaint, leading to the accused's arrest on September 10, 2005. He was granted bail three months later, and police filed a chargesheet on March 3, 2006.

During the trial, Public Prosecutor Yogesh Kadam examined eight witnesses. The defence argued that the cheque was part payment for a Rs 2.95 crore property deal executed via an indemnity bond in Mysuru on April 19, 2004. However, the prosecution proved the bond was fabricated, presenting records that confirmed Paul was in Pune on that date.Also, a forensic handwriting expert noted differences in pen pressure, ink thickness, ink flow, writing sequence, and movement patterns on the cheque.

In a perilous world, India must read the tea leaves well



India’s foreign policy is currently facing an existential crisis. The second term of the Trump administration, which had previously been welcomed by India, has upset India’s carefully crafted foreign policy. The recent India-Pakistan conflict should also be viewed as a ‘wakeup call’. As details of the extent of China’s military connections to Pakistan and of equipment transfer tumble out, India must take notice.Next to the China-Pakistan nexus in the region, it is India’s approach to events in West Asia and the Israel-Iran conflict that clearly need a relook. India has tried, not very successfully, to sit on the fence as far as the current Israel-Iran war is concerned, but it probably needs to think through what is best in its interest. The stakes have become higher with the United States involving itself directly in the Israel-Iran conflict, which saw it using, for the first time, its GBU-57 bunker buster bomb to destroy Iran’s nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and another embedded nuclear site. Neutrality is no longer an option, and despite the announcement of a ceasefire, the possibility of an all-out war is a distinct possibility.A term that is no longer taboo

With the use of the GBU-57 precision guided bombs, the conflict in West Asia has clearly attained a new dimension. The dreaded ‘N word’ is no longer taboo. Hence, the question that India needs to answer is whether it can continue to keep up its stance of neutrality. The situation is turning increasingly complex and it is no longer a mere wakeup call for India and countries across the globe. The threat has become all too real.

It may be too far-fetched to assert that a neutral India is ‘friendless’ in the world of today. A look at the state of affairs that concerns India would suggest, however, that this could well become the case — and that it could continue for quite some time in the future. India’s professed leadership of the Global South and its patronage of nations across West Asia brought it no dividends during the recent India-Pakistan conflict. Instead, India has since been reminded — if this was needed — that it confronts two hostile nuclear powers in its neighbourhood, both of whom would have no moral compunctions in utilising nuclear weapons, if the opportunity arose. Hence, India cannot, any longer, afford to believe that its current policies are bearing fruit. A correct reading of ‘the tea leaves’ as they exist at present is essential for India’s present and its future.Donald Trump’s ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA) policies are today adversely impacting India at levels other than just trade and economics. The U.S. President’s claims to have effected a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, following the short India-Pakistan conflict in May — something that India contradicts, but which Pakistan’s ‘Maximum Leader’ Field Marshal Asim Munir, has publicly endorsed — sets India on a collision course with the U.S. President and his Administration. Mr. Trump’s lunch for Field Marshal Munir and the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi chose not to respond to Mr. Trump’s invitation to visit Washington (while returning from the G-7 meeting in Canada), is again likely to be played up by elements in the U.S. and across the world who favour Pakistan against India.The Israel-Iran conflict is yet another situation in which India finds itself as an ‘outlier’. ‘Neutrality’, in the compelling circumstances of today, is out of sync with reality as also the situation on the ground. India’s tilt towards Israel in recent times, it would appear, has become something of an albatross around India’s neck. India’s Iran policy today has few takers beyond

India’s borders. Its policy of maintaining an equidistance between Israel and Iran has proved to be of little use in so far as extolling the virtues of non-alignment are concerned.Admittedly, we live in perilous times. Today’s situation does not seem to favour India’s long-held policy prescriptions. Israel’s premeditated attack on Iran’s nuclear sites — aided by the U.S. dropping bunker buster bombs — has seen little condemnation across the world. Iran, which needed a strong voice of support like that of India’s to counter the narrative of Israel, the U.S. and the West, will find little comfort in India’s ‘calls for restraint’ on all sides. India’s support and voice, based on its moral strength, would have mattered were it seen to support the victim of the attack, rather than maintain an equidistance between Israel and Iran.It is true that in today’s world, it is fashionable to denigrate consensus in favour of ‘might’. For instance, at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in May, the emphasis seemed to be on the criticality of ‘hard power’ as against ‘soft power’, with dialogue taking a back seat. The stage was set by the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth, who declared that a ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ was a sine qua non for peace in the region, and that China’s ‘calls for hegemony’ in Asia were untenable. He reminded the Singapore audience that ‘any unilateral attempt to change the status-quo in the South China Sea and the First Island Chain by force or coercion is unacceptable’. This disturbed the normally placid atmosphere seen at the Shangri-La Dialogue, and produced a strong repartee from the Chinese delegate present. Subsequently, a Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman warned that the ‘US must never play with fire on the Taiwan question’.

What India needs to doHence, it would be wise in the circumstances for India to prepare for future eventualities of every kind. To start with, there needs to be a detailed study of the growing China-Pakistan military connection as the India-Pakistan conflict in May this year has merely hit the ‘pause button’. More importantly, India must try and better understand how deeply China’s military capabilities have been meshed with those of Pakistan, the critical role being played today by Chinese weaponry in Pakistan’s defence plans, and how Pakistan has managed to integrate Chinese systems with its own defence plans and procedures, including its claims of being able to lock on to hostile targets to counter an attack. Additionally, India needs more details regarding the numbers of J-10Cs and JF-17 fighters in Pakistan’s inventory.As a part of its preparations for a future conflict, India would also do well to examine whether it has the necessary wherewithal for conflicts of longer durations. The United Kingdom, for instance, recently undertook an in-depth study of its defence capabilities which helped highlight areas of critical weakness, including that of ammunition stockpiles, the need to set up a new National Armament System, and a new Cyber and Electromagnetic Command to oversee networks and electronic warfare. For India to prepare for a two front war, it should, apart from learning lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war, refine its policies on many such aspects as well. Undoubtedly, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be a national priority. Aspects such as electro-magnetic manoeuvres to neutralise drones, loitering munitions and glide bombs that dominate the skies today in periods of conflict, should again have high priority.

China’s white paperWhile India remains preoccupied with Pakistan, it would also do well to read the fine print in China’s recently published white paper on “National Security in the ‘New Era’”. This has a clear enunciation of Chinese strategic thinking today and mentions that ‘development and security are like two wings of one body’. The white paper reads like a ‘testament’ on the importance of maintaining scientific and technological security at all times, and the importance of ensuring maintainability of supply chains. It also has a mention of the situation prevalent in the areas neighbouring China, underscoring the fact that these pose threats to China’s borders.To conclude, it might bear mentioning that if China intends to reinforce its strategic objectives in Asia, specially in South Asia, the criticality of its alliance with Pakistan to encircle India must not be underestimated.

The widening grip of intolerance



Navigating the cultural landscape these days is akin to treading a minefield. It is becoming evident that the most innocuous creative expressions can blow up to become heated controversies. Over the past week in Kerala, everything from a character named Janaki in a film to Zumba dance performances by school students has angered some section or the other. Religion happens to be the common thread running through most of these controversies.

What’s in a name?

Though the regional office of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) cleared the film Janaki v/s State of Kerala starring Union Minister Suresh Gopi, the CBFC headquarters in Mumbai demanded a change in the title as well as of the name of the titular character, Janaki, which is another name for goddess Sita. They told the filmmakers through unofficial channels that a survivor of sexual violence cannot be named after Sita. The makers of another film, Token Number, were also forced to change the name of a character from Janaki to Jayanthi after the Board objected to a character with that name having a relationship with a man named Abraham.Given such arbitrary directives, it will likely become impossible to use a common name in a film’s title or for a character. These instances show a disturbing tendency of the CBFC taking over the duties of the ‘hurt sentiments’ group and widening the scope of censorship. The Kerala High Court has pulled up the CBFC, while film bodies in Kerala are up in arms against the body.Questioning moral values

While these two controversies raged on, joyful videos of school students of all ages dancing together in

How do unsafe cancer drugs reach patients? | Explained



The story so far: A major new investigation by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism published by The Hindu has revealed that bad cancer drugs have been shipped to more than 100 countries around the world. Before a cancer drug reaches a patient, they would have already undergone a long, complicated journey. Once the raw materials have been sourced, a typical drug will be manufactured, packaged, shipped, locally distributed and finally put to use. It will travel through factories, storage facilities, transport systems, hospitals and pharmacies. And at every stage of this process, the drug’s quality must remain unharmed. Relatively innocuous events — a change in temperature or poor handling — can have critical effects. And unlike wealthy nations with robust tracking systems, low and middle-income countries often lack the infrastructure to monitor the journey.

What are the risks in manufacturing?

One of the biggest dangers is contamination. Ensuring that cancer drugs are sterile is the ultimate responsibility of the manufacturers. Every action must be tightly controlled. Staff working without proper disinfection processes can carry contaminants. Even a technician moving too quickly in a clean room can create air movement that spreads bacteria. Everything is sanitised right down to the pens and paper.The process is unforgiving: if raw ingredients aren’t tested adequately, if equipment isn’t cleaned properly, and if water isn’t filtered thoroughly, these lifesaving medicines can become lethal.

How do countries ensure such safety?

About 80% of NHS prescriptions in England are generic drugs, identical copies of branded drugs that can be made once a drug’s patent expires. About two-thirds of those come from abroad. To try to ensure that these drugs are safe, the following measures are in place — every batch undergoes two rounds of quality testing, at the manufacturing site, and then on entering the U.K.; during each of these rounds of tests, 20 different markers of drug quality are checked; only specific experts, for example those registered with professional bodies like the Royal Society of Chemistry, are qualified to verify each batch; and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency regularly inspects manufacturing facilities, both in the U.K. and abroad.Such testing systems are the gold standard. Many low- and middle-income countries, however, face significant challenges. In Nepal, for example, limited resources and expertise mean that there is no effective testing and monitoring of imported medicines. Many countries also lack the ability to track drugs through supply chains and, like Nepal, do not have any verified experts or facilities to check drug quality. These shortcomings, combined with corruption issues and porous borders, all mean that bad and potentially counterfeit drugs can enter healthcare systems.

What are the consequences?

Time is of the essence for any cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy, so for that reason alone a substandard or ineffective drug will affect their treatment. Drugs that have not been manufactured properly can be toxic or contaminated — and put a patient in immediate danger.There are numerous examples of this having happened during recent years. In 2019, five young patients from Saudi Arabia developed a high fever, and one died, after taking an Indian-made medicine given at the same

Zumba classes filled social media timelines in the State. The Kerala government launched Zumba sessions in schools and colleges this academic year as a part of its efforts to reduce stress and channelise the interests and energy of students away from drugs into positive alternatives.However, even this made a section of people unhappy. Ultra conservative Islamist groups including Wisdom Islamic Organisation and the Sunni Yuvajana Sangham, the youth wing of the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama, opposed the plan, branding the aerobic dance workout practice as a degradation of “moral values” and a violation of Islamic religious values. Some clerics claimed that students will be made to wear “skimpy clothes” while performing Zumba even though the students were seen wearing their school uniforms in all the videos on social media.Such opposition to a relaxing workout revealed the misogyny of the clerics as well as their fears about the inter-mingling of genders. In the past, citing religious reasons, some of these Islamic organisations have opposed the government’s decision to introduce a gender-neutral uniform in schools and to do away with separate benches for girls and boys.

The ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has refused to back down on its Zumba plan. The General Education Minister, V. Sivankutty, said that the stand taken by these groups will only help fuel majority communalism. The CPI(M) General Secretary, M.A. Baby, who as the State Education Minister in 2008 faced a controversy over a rationalist lesson in a textbook, said that religious organisations can comment on educational issues, but they cannot dictate terms.Curiously, the Bharatiya Vichara Kendram, a Sangh Parivar think tank, also criticised the State government for promoting “foreign practices” such as Zumba. It claimed that the government’s agenda was to sideline yoga trainers.Beyond the cultural sphere, the campaigns of orthodox Islamic groups against vaccination have had dire consequences. Two days ago, a one-year-old child died of jaundice in Malappuram after his parents, both practitioners of alternative medicine, allegedly denied him vaccination and treatment. They also buried the child in mysterious circumstances.Worrying trendIn Kerala, there are an increasing number of fundamentalist voices from different sides of the religious spectrum. Their narrow dikats on creative expressions as well as on issues that are beyond the boundaries of their understanding on religion does not augur well for a State that takes pride in its general progressive

time as chemotherapy drugs. In the same year, four children died and more than a 100 fell ill in Colombia when given the same type of drug. In 2022, at least 10 children in Yemen died after receiving methotrexate, a critical chemotherapy drug used to treat leukaemia and other cancers, that had been contaminated with a deadly bacteria. In 2023, the Bureau uncovered a dozen poor-quality brands of a childhood cancer drug used in Brazil.

What’s WHO doing to ensure safety?

The World Health Organization (WHO) maintains a rapid alert system for dangerous drugs. After a concern has been raised, the WHO assesses it and an alert is then sent out to all member governments. However, this system only catches problems after harm occurs. In addition, many regions lack facilities to test drugs. Only seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, have laboratories that have been approved as meeting WHO standards.The WHO has put several mechanisms in place to keep a check on drug safety in low and middle-income countries. One is the Global Benchmarking Tool: a tool that assesses and rates national regulatory systems on a scale of 1 (least mature) to 4 (most mature). In 2023, 70% of WHO member countries were rated level 1 or 2, meaning they have limited capacity to check drugs coming into the country.Then we have the Essential Medicines List: a list of medications that are considered to be the safest and most effective for meeting the most important health system needs. While generic versions of drugs on this list could still be fake or substandard, the existence of the list helps countries prioritise limited resources.Third, there are prequalification programs which are lists that contain laboratories, specific drugs and sources of active pharmaceutical ingredients that the WHO has inspected, evaluated, and confirmed to be acceptable for use. This helps governments and national regulators procure safe medicines.Fourth, is the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification which ensures that pharmaceutical products are consistently produced and controlled to quality standards. Most countries will only accept the import and sale of medicines that have been manufactured by internationally recognised GMPs. It is used by pharmaceutical regulators and the pharmaceutical industry in over 100 countries.And finally the WHO certification scheme. A Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products (CoPP) can be requested by a country that wants to import a medicine, and it would issued by the exporting country according to the WHO guidelines. It acts like a passport for medicines, proving the item is approved and safely made in the exporting country.These measures certainly provide some protection against dangerous drugs, but the protections they offer simply aren’t enough. Without the level of oversight seen in countries like the U.K., these measures often fail to prevent substandard drugs from reaching patients. For example, a paper published this year revealed the results of testing of 84 drugs intended for shipment from India to Nigeria. All 84 held CoPPs. All 84 failed testing.

No fuel for old vehicles: Delhi begins crackdown using AI cameras

New Delhi: In a major step toward combating vehicular pollution, the Delhi government has begun enforcing strict new rules on End-of-Life (EOL) vehicles starting Tuesday.As per the directives issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), all petrol pumps across the National Capital Territory (NCT) will deny fuel to old vehicles identified through AI-powered Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras.From Tuesday onwards, EOL vehicles, those that have exceeded their legal age limit of 10 years for diesel and 15 years for petrol vehicles, will not be allowed to refuel at petrol or diesel stations.

Every July 1st, India observes National Doctor’s Day, to honour the legacy of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. However, in recent years, this commemoration has become overshadowed by more visible policy events such as the roll-out of the Goods and Services Tax in 2017 and the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in 2024. This erosion of a symbolic space reserved for doctors is symptomatic of a deeper shift: a slow and complex erosion of the moral authority, public trust, and professional respect that physicians firmly held.Epidemiological transition

This decline is not due to a failure of medicine; rather, it is due to its extraordinary success. To understand this shift, we must look beyond day-to-day grievances and dive deep into what public health scholar A. Omran (1971) described as the ‘epidemiological transition’. He describes how societies evolve in their disease patterns. As populations move from poverty to prosperity, the dominant health threats shift from infectious diseases and nutritional deficiencies to chronic, non-communicable diseases and eventually to a complex coexistence of both. Superimposed on this is the demographic transition, marked by falling birth and death rates, ageing populations, and shrinking family units. Together, these transitions radically redefine both the public’s expectation of medicine and the role of doctors.In medieval times, the social role of the healer was mediated not by scientific inquiry but by moral authority, religious education, and ritual purity. Medical advice was as likely to come from clergy or spiritual figures as from trained physicians. That changed rapidly with the dawn of scientific breakthroughs during the Industrial Revolution. From Pasteur’s germ theory to Koch’s postulates and from the discovery of anaesthesia to the isolation of penicillin, medicine acquired a cloak of rationality and predictability. Before the Victorian era, surgeons had the same social standing as barbers. They were elevated to professional status when the knife, supported by chloroform and antisepsis, began to promise not agony but a cure. These were the fruits of an age driven by the curiosity of lone experimenters; public laboratories; and academic idealism. After these discoveries, doctors were seen as saviours and miracle workers, wielding tools that bent nature. But this golden era, too, was transitional.Science becomes commerceStage four of the epidemiological transition (currently ongoing in many countries) is marked by delayed degenerative diseases. It has brought about a longer life but not a necessarily better one. The quality of life deteriorates even as costs



escalate. In stage five, with emerging and re-emerging diseases (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), uncertainty rules again. Today, as India (and the world) faces this dual burden of infectious and chronic diseases, the expectations from medicine are more fraught than ever. Dengue persists alongside diabetes. Tuberculosis coexists with obesity-related disorders. While infections are largely controllable (at a cost), chronic diseases are relentless. The treatment of hypertension, depression, or autoimmune illnesses offers no clear endpoint.There is no one-size-fits-all solution; instead, we are handed complex risk algorithms, lifestyle prescriptions that defy modern abundance, and therapies that offer more probability than certainty. In this climate, doctors are no longer seen as custodians of miraculous cures but as gatekeepers of advice that is often unaffordable, frequently incomprehensible, and occasionally ineffective. Statistics have replaced certainty. Protocols have replaced personalisation. A physician today must recommend less salt, less screen time, and less red meat, which contradicts the freedoms of the modern consumer life. It is hard to respect the messenger when the message feels like moral policing.Caught in the crossfireWhat worsens this fracture of public trust is that the discoveries once driven by individual scientific curiosity have become institutionalised commerce. The fruits of medicine are no longer shaped by academic purity but monetised by conglomerates, wrapped in patents, and rationed as commercial products. What began as a public good has become a market offering. Doctors serve as foot soldiers in an industrial healthcare complex, absorbing public frustration that cannot reach corporations or policymakers.Lifestyle changes, now central to chronic disease care, require moral discipline that institutions

Mohamed Salah set to sign for Turkish outfit Trabzonspor



Egyptian star Mohamed Salah is all set to sign for Turkish club Trabzonspor, ending his 9-year association with Premier League giants Liverpool after helping them win 2 league titles and a Champions League trophy. On Wednesday, Salah arrived smiling at an Istanbul airport wearing Trabzonspor's burgundy and blue kit ahead of his expected move to the club as hundreds of fans jostled to get a glimpse of the Egyptian forward.The Turkish club had announced on Tuesday that they were in negotiations with Salah and club chairman Ertugrul Dogan said they expected to sign the 34-year-old on a free transfer at a ceremony in the Black Sea city on Thursday."Trabzon, are you ready I can hear you. See you very soon," Salah said in a video posted by the club on X. "Everywhere is Trabzon to us," he added while

wearing a Trabzonspor kit, referring to the club's motto.Upon arriving at Ataturk Airport, Salah was met by hundreds of fans. He waved at supporters and initiated a traditional chant with them, before departing for a medical check and a later planned flight east to Trabzon.Salah left Liverpool this summer after nine years, having scored 257 goals in 442 appearances. In the 2024-25 season, Salah scored 29 Premier League goals and provided 18 assists, equalling the league record for most goal involvements in a single season and setting the record for a 38-game campaign.He was named Premier League Player of the Season and won the Golden Boot and the Playmaker Award, becoming the first player to take all three in one campaign.His output waned last season, with seven goals and seven assists in 27 league matches and he was left on the bench in Champions League games, leading to a public spat with Liverpool's then-manager Arne Slot.Salah started his career in Europe at Swiss side Basel in 2012 and later joined Chelsea. He also had brief stints at Fiorentina and AS Roma between 2015 and 2017 before joining Liverpool.Trabzonspor – generally considered to be the fourth biggest team in Turkey after Istanbul sides Fenerbahce, Galatasaray, and Besiktas – finished third in the Super Lig last season and will enter the Europa League playoff round. The club's last league championship was in the 2021-22 season.Salah had been close to joining Besiktas, but negotiations had stalled over financial and image-rights demands, according to local media.

Ronaldo watches his partly-owned club Almeria defeat current team Al Nassr

Cristiano Ronaldo on Tuesday attended a pre-season friendly between his current club Al Nassr and UD Almeria, a club he owns a 25% stake in. The Portugal superstar watched from the stands as the Spanish second division outfit defeated the Saudi Pro League champions 2-0 in a pre-season friendly.Ronaldo also met his Al Nassr teammates as well as new coach Ange Postecoglu, who replaced Jorge Jesus. He was gifted a personalised jersey by UD Almeria president Mohamed Al Khereiji.



World cup campaign, which ended after they lost 1-0 to Spain in the Round of 16 last month.Substitute Mikel Merino scored in added time, sending his side into the quarter-finals while extending their run without conceding a goal. Merino struck in the 91st minute after fellow substitute Ferran Torres slipped a through pass behind Portugal's defence.Ahead of the match, Ronaldo had admitted that the 2026 FIFA World Cup would be the last time he plays in the tournament."Yes, it's my last one. Let's go and enjoy it," said Ronaldo in a press conference ahead of the game. It was a rather combative interaction with the press with Ronaldo calling out journalists who he said don't "like" him.

PCB threatens ban on ex-PAK cricketers for participating in unauthorised league

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced that former players who are participating in an unauthorised tournament called the Asian Legends Cup in Lusaka, Zambia, will face disciplinary actions, including a ban of two years from approved overseas cricket leagues or events."International Cricket Council (ICC) considers this league as an unsanctioned/disapproved cricket event under the ICC Regulations on the Sanctioning of Events and Player Release and the tournament has not been sanctioned by the Zambia Cricket Union (ZCU) as well. The ICC has further reiterated that all foreign players are required to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from their respective home Board before participating in overseas cricket events. The Regulations also place an obligation on Member Boards to take appropriate action against any player who participates in an unsanctioned event. Failure to comply with these obligations may result in action against the respective Member Board," the PCB said in a statement.



League (PSL) for a period of two (02) year," it added. A number of well known players were named in the Pakistan Panthers squad which appeared in the Asian Legends Cup but some of them pulled out after learning that it was not sanctioned. Those who opted out included Muhammad Hafeez, Shoaib Malik, Wahab Riaz, Sohail Tanvir, and Umar Akmal, according to sources as per PTI.But the players who appeared in a match on July 31 against the Asian eleven included Imran Nazir, Taufeeq Umar, Muhammad Irfan, Rahat Ali, Yasir Shah, Zahid Mahmood, Hasan Raza, and Ibrar Hussain.Taufeeq has until recently held the batting coach position with the national women's team while others have also been active on the domestic circuit. The tournament itself was abruptly ended on Tuesday by the organisers.

India's Glasgow 2026 para champions honoured by M3M Foundation and PCI

Hyderabad:In recognition of India's historic performance at the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games, M3M Foundation, in partnership with the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), felicitated the country's medal-winning para athletes and their coaches for their outstanding achievements on the international stage.The ceremony honoured India's seven Commonwealth Games para medallists, who delivered the nation's best-ever performance in para events at the Games by winning seven medals — three gold, two silver and two bronze.



The athletes felicitated included Sharmila Dhankar (Gold – Women's Shot Put F57), Shilpa Shyla (Bronze – Women's Shot Put F57), Jhandu Kumar (Bronze – Para Powerlifting), Soman Rana (Gold – Men's F57 shot put) Shubham Juyal (Silver – Men's F 57 shot put), Dilip Manadav Gavit (Gold – 100 m T47), Mohammed Basil (Silver – 100 m T 47)The event also recognised the invaluable contribution of the coaches and support staff whose dedication has played a vital role in India's growing success in para sports.

years of commitment from our athletes, coaches and the entire support system. I sincerely thank M3M Foundation for recognising our champions and standing firmly with the Paralympic movement. Such partnerships play a crucial role in helping our athletes dream bigger and achieve greater success".Dr. Payal Kanodia, Chairperson, Paralympic Committee of India, said "Every medal won in Glasgow is far more than a sporting achievement, it is a testament to extraordinary resilience, unwavering determination, and the indomitable spirit of the human will. Behind every podium finish lies years of relentless discipline, sacrifice, and the steadfast guidance of coaches, families, and support teams who have shaped

P.V. Sindhu unveils vision for sports excellence centre in Andhra Pradesh



Hyderabad: Double Olympics medallist P.V. Sindhu and the Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh unveiled the vision for the P.V. Sindhu Centre for Sports Excellence in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday, marking the public launch of a landmark non-profit institution that aims to redefine sports development in India.Conceived by the former World Champion and Padma Bhushan awardee P.V. Sindhu, the Centre is being developed as an integrated sports and education ecosystem that brings together seven sporting disciplines, high-performance coaching, sports science, recovery, nutrition, strength and conditioning, and academics under one campus.

The ceremony marked more than the laying of a foundation stone.Construction is already well underway, with the basement and substructure complete and the superstructure taking shape.

The project's vision evolved significantly following discussions with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who encouraged Sindhu and her husband, Venkata Datta Sai, to think not just about the next few years, but the next hundred. What began as a badminton academy has since grown into a long-term institution designed to serve generations of athletes and students.Inspired by visits to some of the world's leading high-performance sports facilities, including Aspetar in Doha and the Inspire Institute of Sport, the centre has been designed around the belief that elite performance is created through the seamless integration of coaching, science, recovery, education and culture.

Auqib Nabi has magic in his wrists, knew he would go places: Ex-J&K captain Samiullah Beigh

New Delhi: In a modern cricketing landscape obsessed with speed guns, former Jammu and Kashmir captain Samiullah Beigh believes true quality lies in the ability to move the ball off the pitch, a trait he identified in fellow fast-bowling all-rounder Auqib Nabi.Nabi's sensational rise has earned him a maiden call-up to the Indian Test squad for the upcoming two-match series against Sri Lanka, thus making him the first player from Jammu and Kashmir to get a call-up to the national red-ball side.Beigh, who also works as an assistant engineer in the Public Works Department in Srinagar, spoke exclusively to IANS about the all-rounder, the physical and mental endurance essential in unearthing relentless seamers in the valley, and how overcoming adversity makes players from smaller states uniquely tenacious.



Q. Back in 2022, you mentioned somewhere that Auqib Nabi is someone to watch out for. Now that he has been called up to the Indian Test team as Jasprit Bumrah's replacement, how does it feel to see that prediction become a reality?

A. Yes, back in 2022, I held a two-month coaching camp for the senior Ranji team at the JKCA ground in Srinagar. I could see raw talent in him, wherein he could move the ball off the pitch from the same spot without any major change in action.Having played at higher level myself as a fast-bowling all-rounder, I immediately spotted that this trait is extremely rare in the cricketing world, and this lad could go places if groomed properly. In that camp, we worked on a few things without tinkering with his natural abilities.

Q. Nabi's teammates call him 'Hacker' because of hitting the exact same spot relentlessly without overcomplicating things. How crucial can this specific brand of discipline be in international cricket compared to the sheer raw pace of someone like Umran Malik?

A. In modern-day cricket, raw pace means nothing unless it is backed up with the ability to deviate the ball off the pitch. Umran Malik is a glaring example of a bowler with raw pace only, which is why he is struggling to get into the state team.Auqib has magic in his wrists, and the cricketing world will be really surprised to see his skill set in slightly helpful conditions, though Sri Lanka may not necessarily be the place for his ideal debut.

Q. The dry, sluggish pitches in Sri Lanka historically reward seamers who plug away at disciplined lengths and extract subtle movement. Given Nabi's success on flat decks and in stifling humidity in the Ranji Trophy, how well-equipped do you think he is to succeed in Galle or Colombo?Geographic Reference

A. Galle as well as Colombo are historically non-ideal for pacers; they are either very flat or square turners. Any fast bowler would hate to make his debut in such conditions. But Auqib, being a rare commodity, will definitely provide lots of control to the team if given a chance, and he will surely make the new ball talk at least for a few overs.

Q. You have spoken previously about how you would carry drinks for the zonal team despite being amongst the wickets as players from traditional powerhouse states were mainly in the playing eleven. With Auqib in the Test team and six J&K players recently making the North Zone squad for the Duleep Trophy, do you feel that systemic bias has finally been dismantled?

A. No, systemic bias takes a lot to overcome – it is an inherent bias. Although live broadcasts and J&K creating history by winning the Ranji Trophy have helped, I believe the mindset of selectors and people who matter has still not overcome that block regarding selecting players from J&K. If that were not the case, Auqib should have been selected for the tours of England, the West Indies, or Afghanistan, or at least in the first-choice squad for the Sri Lanka series.

Q. Coach Ajay Sharma mentioned that J&K cricketers used to be picked for the Duleep Trophy merely as 'quota players.' As a former player, what does it mean to you to see J&K players now single-handedly pulling their team into winning the Ranji Trophy and commanding spots in the Duleep Trophy on merit?

The nearly two-lakh-square-foot campus will feature international-standard facilities, including specialised badminton infrastructure, a 25-metre competition swimming pool, Andhra Pradesh's first 25-metre shooting range, integrated sports science and recovery spaces, and an on-campus school that will enable young athletes to pursue both education and sport without compromise.Located in Visakhapatnam, the centre seeks to establish the city as a national destination for sport, education and high-performance training while creating wider opportunities through coaching, talent identification, research partnerships and community outreach.P.V. Sindhu said, "This centre is my most meaningful contribution to Indian sport. I am committing much of what I have earned throughout my career towards building an institution that creates opportunities for future generations. My dream is to create an ecosystem where young athletes have access to world-class coaching, sports science, education and the support they need to realise their full potential. I also appeal to corporates and philanthropists to join us in this journey through CSR and long-term collaboration, so together we can build an institution that will serve generations to come."Mr. Nara Lokesh, Hon'ble Minister For Human Resources Development, Information Technology, Electronics & Communications and RTG, said, "P. V. Sindhu has brought immense pride to India through her remarkable achievements on the global stage. With the establishment of the P. V. Sindhu Centre For Sports Excellence, she is creating a lasting legacy by inspiring and nurturing the next generation of champions."This initiative perfectly aligns with the vision of the Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu Garu to transform Andhra Pradesh into a leading sporting destination with world-class infrastructure and opportunities for young talent. The Government of Andhra Pradesh is proud to partner in this landmark initiative and remains committed to creating an ecosystem where every aspiring athlete has the opportunity to dream big, train with the best, and represent India with distinction. I congratulate Sindhu, her family, and all the partners associated with this inspiring endeavour, which will shape the future of Indian sport for generations to come."The Centre is expected to be completed by May 2028, when it will welcome its first generation of athletes and students.

A. This statement by coach Ajay Sharma exactly highlights that the bias towards cricketers from this part of the country hasn't gone away. There was never a quota system. If that were so, I recall at least two instances where I was not picked for the North Zone squad despite being the highest wicket-taker in the league round of the Ranji Trophy. Simply put, the selectors wouldn't take our performances seriously, and I think not much has changed.

Q: Former J&K players Abdul Qayoom and Mohammed Mudhasir have spoken a lot about the fast bowling talent in J&K. What exactly is it about the J&K cricketing environment that breeds fast bowlers with such relentless stamina?

A. Fast bowling is about genes and passion. Here, we are naturally well-built and very passionate about fast bowling from a very young age. Plus, our diet and climate help build the stamina and strength needed for a fast bowler to survive the test of time and longevity. Most of our good fast bowlers have served for a decade or so. For instance, Abid Nabi and I played for about 16 to 17 years for the senior J&K Ranji team.

Q. A few years ago, you stated that for J&K to truly capitalize on its gold mine of fast bowlers, the BCCI and JKCA needed to appoint a permanent fast-bowling coach and trainer. With the rise of first Umran and now Auqib, is that need fulfilled, or are the players still relying mostly on raw talent and short-term mentorship?

A. Yes, the JKCA has to appoint a full-time, all-weather bowling consultant for J&K fast bowlers, and not just for one season. Fast bowling is about preparing in off-season and pre-season camps, when J&K currently has no coach available to train and groom fast bowlers across various age groups. The J&K Cricket Association would do well to think along those lines.

Q. What immediate impact do you think Nabi sharing a dressing room with Mohammed Siraj and the Indian support staff will have on the young fast bowlers currently training back in Baramulla, Srinagar and various parts of J&K?

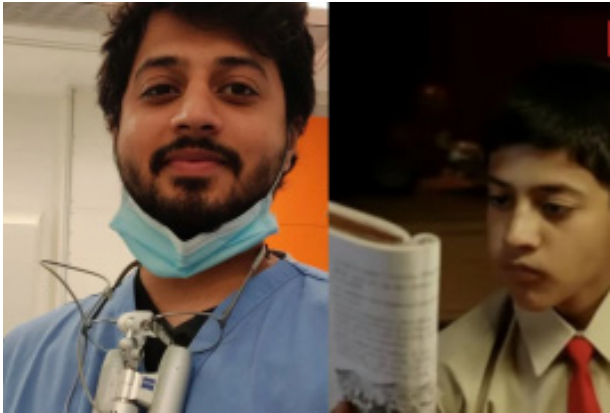
A. Waiting makes you mentally strong and hungry to grab opportunities with both hands. MS Dhoni once said that players from smaller states are mentally stronger than those coming from bigger ones, and I can very well relate to it. We are built to deal with adversity and take things in our stride right from our childhood days.

Everything we achieve now feels like a bonus because, given the adversity we have seen, not many expect us to reach those levels. And when we do, we don't look back. I am sure Auqib will do wonders in the days to come.

Mirabai Chanu recalls emotional Glasgow gold after years of setbacks

New Delhi: Commonwealth Games gold medallist Mirabai Chanu opened up on the emotional weight behind her Glasgow triumph during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with India's CWG 2026 medallists, recalling the injuries, family problems and disappointment of missing out on a medal at the Paris Olympics that made her podium moment particularly poignant.

Taare Zameen Par’s Yohaán left Bollywood, is now a gold medalist dentist and pilot in the UK



When Taare Zameen Par hit theatres in 2007, it wasn't just another Bollywood release. The Aamir Khan directorial became a cultural phenomenon, sparking important conversations about parenting, the education system, and the challenges faced by children with learning disabilities. More importantly, it introduced audiences to two memorable young actors — Darshel Safary and Sachet Engineer. While Darshel continues to explore opportunities in the entertainment industry, Sachet seemingly vanished from the spotlight after the film's success. Nearly two decades later, fans who remember him as Ishaan Awasthi's loving elder brother might be surprised to learn that he is now a successful dentist based in the UK — and a licensed pilot in the making.

Yohaán aka Sachet is now a dentist Sachet Engineer, who played Yohaán Nandkishore Awasthi in Taare Zameen Par, portrayed the ideal elder sibling. Academically bright, skilled at table tennis, and fiercely protective of his younger brother, Yohaán was everything Ishaan wasn't. While Ishaan struggled with letters and numbers, Yohaán excelled in the classroom. Interestingly, life seems to have imitated art for Sachet. Unlike many child actors who continued chasing fame, Sachet chose academics. According to his LinkedIn profile, he completed his M.Clin.Dent in Periodontology from the prestigious UCL Eastman Dental Institute in London and is a registered member of the European Federation of Periodontology

(EFP). He has also cleared both parts of the Overseas Registration Examination (ORE), making him eligible to practise dentistry in the UK. Before moving abroad, he graduated from DY Patil University and even earned a gold medal in Periodontology — proving that Yohaán's academic excellence wasn't just limited to the screen. But dentistry isn't his only passion. Sachet is also a pilot in the making. Although his Instagram account is private, occasional glimpses into his life reveal another impressive achievement. In 2024, Sachet shared a photograph from the cockpit of an aircraft, revealing his love for flying. "Being in control up here makes the fiercest challenges down below shrink to insignificance. A true reminder that the horizon is endless, and so are possibilities. My first flight, but certainly not the last," he wrote. For someone who once charmed audiences as a child actor, the journey to becoming a dentist and pilot may seem unexpected. Yet, acting was never really part of his grand plan. In a 2022 interview with Bollywood Hungama, Sachet revealed that landing Taare Zameen Par was nothing more than a happy accident. "I am from a film family. My grandmother, Krishna Kumari Seth, was an actress while my grandfather, Suraj Prakash, was a producer. So I was always surrounded by the world of films, though I didn't plan to get into the field. The makers were originally auditioning my younger brother. I just happened to be there and they asked me, 'Why don't you also audition?' I did, and a month later, I got a call. I was 11 at that time," he recalled. The film's massive success made him an instantly recognisable face. Film offers followed, but Sachet turned them all down. Sachet Engineer aka Yohaán Awasthi Sachet Engineer aka Yohaán Awasthi. (Photo: Sachet Engineer/Instagram) "People started recognising me on the streets. I would just smile. I've grown quite a bit, but still people are able to guess. Or they feel they've seen me somewhere. I did a couple of commercials later on. I got a few film offers but didn't take them up because I wanted to pursue my education before I got sidetracked," he said. Interestingly, Sachet had not completely shut the door on acting. During the same interview, he admitted that he would love to return to the industry once he completed his education. Four years later, however, there has been no sign of a comeback.

Sshura Khan hits back at troll calling husband Arbaaz Khan an ‘old man’: ‘Vintage model’

Ever since actor Arbaaz Khan tied the knot with makeup artist Sshura Khan in 2023, the couple has frequently found themselves at the receiving end of online trolling over the age gap between them. Now, once again, a social media user took a swipe at Sshura, but this time she chose to respond with humour. During a recent Q&A session with her followers on social media, a user asked her whether she was happy with an "old man," seemingly referring to Arbaaz. Sshura responded with writing, "Are you for real? He's not an old man; he's a limited-edition vintage model." Two years ago, in an interview with The Indian Express, Arbaaz had addressed the age gap between him and Sshura. He said, "Though my wife is much younger than me, it is not like she is 16 years old. She knew what she wanted in her life, and I knew what I wanted in my life. We spent a lot of time together in that one year to really see what we expect out of each other, what do we want, and how are we looking at our future. Such decisions are not made in a hurry." Speaking about the trolling that followed their marriage, Arbaaz had added, "It's not like we were not aware of it or we hid it from each other. As a girl, she knew what she was getting into, and as a man, I knew what I was getting into. Two people of the same age can be together and probably separate in a year. So, is age the only factor that keeps relationships going? Ask



yourself. In fact, whenever you see there is a very big age gap between marriages, they have far higher success rate." Arbaaz and Sshura fell in love on the sets of the film Patna Shukla, where she worked as a makeup artist for lead actor Raveena Tandon. The couple got married in an intimate ceremony in 2023 and welcomed their daughter, Sipaara Khan, in 2025. Before marrying Sshura, Arbaaz was married to actor Malaika Arora for nearly two decades. The former couple divorced in 2017 and share a son, Arhaan Khan.

NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani drops hint about Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce wedding venue, date

Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce are set to get married in New York, reveals Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Zohran Mamdani has confirmed that Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's wedding will take place in New York. Swifties worldwide are currently on cloud nine, as an official confirmation of sorts has arrived regarding the date and venue of the highly anticipated wedding of their queen bee, American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, and professional football player Travis Kelce. Interestingly, the city's mayor himself has dropped a major hint about their impending wedding, much to their fans' delight.

While addressing the media about the security measures being taken for the ongoing FIFA World Cup 2026, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani revealed that the "Swelce" (a portmanteau for Swift and Kelce) wedding ceremony will take place in New York at the start of July, confirming rumours that have been circulating for quite some time. Mamdani, however, admitted that he hasn't been invited to the wedding. "I am fully confident in the work of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), as well as our state partners, in delivering that safe experience," Page Six quoted him as telling the reporters on Monday, June 15, while discussing the city's preparedness for the July 5 World Cup match at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford. He added, "We are the biggest city in the country. We are used to big events, and we are incredibly excited for this one. We know it coincides with the Knicks' [NBA] Finals run. We know it coincides with July 4, America 250, Taylor Swift's wedding — all happening at the same time — and we are so excited to welcome the world here." When asked if he had been invited by the couple to their wedding and if he was planning to go, Mamdani replied, "No and no. I wish them a lovely wedding. I'll listen to 'Only the Young' (Taylor Swift's 2020 hit track) at home on my own."

For those unaware, Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce announced their engagement on social media on August 26, 2025, by sharing photos of their proposal. "Your English teacher and your gym teacher are getting married," she wrote. ICYMI | Taare Zameen Par's Yohaán left Bollywood, is now a gold medalist dentist and pilot in the UK. They have been dating since the summer of 2023 and made their relationship public later that year. Since then, the two have made frequent appearances together, with Taylor attending the Kansas City Chiefs' matches, in which Travis plays, and the latter supporting her during her concerts. While the wedding planning was underway, sev-



eral reports emerged earlier this month, mentioning that the iconic Madison Square Garden might host the celebrity wedding. Page Six and TMZ reported that the couple was eyeing the July 3 weekend for a ceremony in New York, with Madison Square Garden as the leading venue. However, neither Taylor nor Travis has publicly confirmed any wedding plans thus far.

Steven Spielberg scrapped opera film with Colman Domingo

Los Angeles: Oscar-winning filmmaker Steven Spielberg says he wanted to make a film on Broadway duo Ira and George Gershwin with Colman Domingo, but decided not to go ahead with the project. "I was going to make a movie about Ira and George Gershwin, and I was going to make a movie about the process of writing and staging Porgy and Bess," Spielberg at Good Hang podcast.

Saif Ali Khan calls Agent Vinod a ‘vanity’ project: ‘Wasn’t a tightly made film’



Released more than a decade ago amid considerable hype, Sriram Raghavan's spy actioner Agent Vinod ultimately failed to live up to expectations. Despite featuring some of the film industry's most accomplished action choreography and a generous dose of humour woven into its narrative, the film struggled due to a plot that seemed to head in too many directions at once. The box office disappointment was particularly difficult for Saif Ali Khan, who had been deeply invested in the project, both as its lead star and producer. "I made the film for myself"

Now, in a conversation with Variety India, Saif reflected on the film's failure, admitting that Agent Vinod may have been driven partly by vanity. "I think of Agent

Vinod as a film that might have been vain. But also, that film opened really well, you know. It's just that it did not sustain because it probably wasn't a tightly made film, or it went off track in many ways. Or, as Sriram himself said, he put too many toppings on the pizza." Saif, however, maintained that the film's core idea was strong. "But the idea wasn't bad, and the title wasn't bad, and it was the right film to make. Imagine a kind of spy movie ahead of its time, perhaps. It was a cool film, but it should have held more. Maybe we made some mistakes." He clarified that vanity alone was not responsible for the film's downfall. "But my point is: it was vanity. I was excited to do that. I made the film for myself, but it did open well. So its failure was not because it was a vain idea." Too much interference from Saif and Kareena's comments came just days after actor Lalit Parimoo, who was part of the film, claimed that excessive interference from the lead actors, Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan, contributed to the project's failure. Speaking to Siddharth Kannan, Parimoo said, "I think the main reason was that there was too much interference from the stars, Saif and Kareena. The way Sriram wanted to make that film, he couldn't make it that way. He was constantly being told what he should do, so it became a mess. The writing and the direction team... They didn't get to present what they wanted. That was the flaw of the film." Earlier, in a conversation with Galatta Plus, Sriram Raghavan had also reflected on Agent Vinod's shortcomings. "One mistake I made is to take it for granted that the story is not vital, the sequences are vital. It wasn't as good as it should have been," he said

Sanchita Ugale’s grandfather breaks down: ‘Didn’t have a godfather, she had work’

The Indian entertainment industry is yet to come to terms with the shocking death of actor Sanchita Ugale, who rose to fame with her role in the television serial Kumkum Bhagya. The 22-year-old actor was found dead at her home in the Nallasopara area of Palghar district, Maharashtra, on Sunday, June 14. According to news agency PTI, the police suspect that she died by suicide. Speaking to the media, Sanchita's grandfather, Gopinath, said she rose through the ranks of show business on her own, without any support system. Fondly remembering her, he was overcome with emotion. "She was an extremely talented girl. She had progressed on her own merit and through her hard work. She did not have a godfather," NDTV quoted him as saying. If you or someone you know is experiencing feelings of distress, depression, or emotional instability, please reach out to a certified professional or a dedicated mental health service. "What she was going through mentally at that time... what the real issue was... because she had no disputes with anyone. Nobody ever spoke ill of her. Nothing was lacking in her life. She had achieved everything through her own efforts. She was a very capable girl. She had made a big name for herself across our entire taluka and Ahmednagar district," he added. Why fans knew her as Pooja instead of Sanchita Gopinath shared that she gained popularity with her performance as Pooja in the television show Saajan Ghar. He revealed that people subsequently began recognising her by her character's name rather than her own. "Those who watched her television serials knew her by the name Pooja. She became so popular through that character that people across the Ahmednagar district would call her Pooja." "Whenever I went somewhere and told people she was my granddaughter, all our relatives and acquaintances across the taluka and district knew her only as Pooja. Hardly anyone there recognised her as Sanchita. Everyone knew her by the name Pooja, which was her character's name in the serial," he recalled. "It is very painful. Why she did this... only God knows what was going on in her mind. It is completely beyond our understanding," he said, while also refuting speculations that a lack of work pushed her to suicide. "No, she had work as well," he added.

AICWA requests investigation Meanwhile, the All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) has stepped forward, requesting Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis to order a high-level investigation into her death. However, her father has maintained that he does not suspect any foul play and reportedly informed the Achole police that he doesn't have suspicions about anyone regarding Sanchita's death. At the time of the incident, she



was alone at her home. From Kumkum Bhagya to Chhaava: Sanchita Ugale's acting journey While it was her performance as Diya Tandon in Kumkum Bhagya that earned Sanchita widespread fame and acclaim, she had also acted in soap operas such as Wagley Ki Duniya and Dilwale Dulha Le Jayegi. Sanchita also played Tarabai in the Vicky Kaushal-Rashmika Mandanna starrer Chhaava (2025) and made an appearance alongside Manoj Bajpayee in Silence 2: The Night Owl Bar Shootout (2024). After learning about her suicide, Sanchita's close friend and colleague Megha Sharma revealed that the late actor had been undergoing treatment for depression. "I am in deep shock and out of words. She had some health issues and was suffering from depression since January. She had some personal reasons and was undergoing treatment," Megha told Moneycontrol.

She added, "But she was a happy-go-lucky person. In fact, I met her 10 days ago and took her for an audition. She was convinced that she could make it. Later, her phone was switched off. She often said that she would end her life, and we all, including her mother and family, motivated her to stay positive and not think about such negative things. But this time we could not save her. She loved herself." According to news agency ANI, Sanchita's remains were found in a room that was locked from inside. Although her family members rushed her to the Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation Hospital, she was declared dead after examination. "A police team inspected the scene immediately after being alerted about the incident. We did not find anything suspicious at the spot, and no suicide note was recovered," a police official told PTI. The officials have registered a case of accidental death and launched a probe to ascertain the motive.

Kala Hiran makers issue legal notice to Govind Namdev; demand Rs 50 lakh, public apology

The controversy surrounding Kala Hiran, a film allegedly inspired by the 1998 blackbuck poaching case associated with Salman Khan, continues to deepen. In the latest development, producer Amit Jani has sent a legal notice to veteran actor Govind Namdev after the actor publicly disassociated himself from the project.

Taking to X, Jani claimed that Namdev had been served a legal notice as he sought an apology from the actor within seven days. He also claimed that the actor had been asked to pay Rs 50 lakh in damages to the production house. "Govind Namdev has been issued a legal notice. He must publicly apologise within seven days and pay Rs 50 lakh in damages to the production house, failing which legal action will be initiated." Kala Hiran has been under scrutiny since the release of its first poster, as it appeared to be based on Salman Khan's 1998 blackbuck poaching case. The makers later released a teaser where the lead character, named Ayaan Khan, looks strikingly similar to Salman. Speaking to Amar Ujala, Govind Namdev said he was shocked when he watched the teaser and realised that the film being promoted was vastly different from the project he had agreed to be part of. "As soon as I watched the trailer, I was shaken. I immediately realised that the project was completely different from what I had shot for. We were never told that a character resembling Salman Khan would be created and portrayed in this manner. The moment I saw the trailer, I felt I had been kept in the dark and used. There is a world of difference between what I was told and what has actually been made," he said. The actor further claimed that the project had originally been pitched to him under a different title. "I was told we were making a film called Sambhal. At that time, I had absolutely no idea that the story would later take a completely different direction," he said.

Namdev maintained that his involvement in the film was limited to courtroom sequences and that he believed the narrative would simply recreate proceedings that were already part of the public record. "I was informed that there was a long courtroom sequence and that was all I had to do. It was also mentioned that nothing new was being added from our side and that we were merely presenting what had happened in court. I felt there was nothing wrong in depicting facts already on record, which is why I agreed to be part of it," he said. Addressing the Bishnoi gang controversy, which has frequently surfaced in discussions surrounding Salman Khan, Namdev clarified that he did not endorse any such association. "I cannot consider any Bishnoi gang as my ideal. I cannot even think of such a thing. I believed I was only performing the courtroom portion. However, what has come to light now has made me uncomfortable as well," he said. Amit Jani claims Govind Namdev agreed to do the sequel as well. Previously, on June 14, producer Amir Jani took to X and shared a video claiming that Govind Namdev was fully aware of the contents of the film as he had agreed to become a part of it after reading the script. He also shared that the actor shot for the courtroom sequence wherein it was obvious that the film was based on the real life case. He alleged that the cheating claims against the makers are false, and instead accused Namdev of cheating the makers, as contractually, he is bound to not defame the film. Amit also claimed that Govind was signed not just for this film, but also for a potential sequel of the film and added that Namdev was only distancing himself from the project to stay in the good books of Salman Khan. Notably, Govind Namdev is not the first actor to distance himself from the film.