Eye Secrets
Spy in every blink
Daily
www.eyesecretdaily.com
Rangareddy Vol No. 1 Issue 143 Date:Sunday, 18-10-2026 Price:2/- Pages: 8

19 Killed, 25 Hurt in Kolkata Puja Pandal Stampede



KOLKATA: At least 19 people were killed and 25 injured in a stampede at an overcrowd ed Durga Puja pandal in north Kolkata on Saturday evening after heavy rain triggered panic among hundreds of revellers gathered for Saptami celebrations. The toll could rise.

The tragedy struck near the Chorebagan Sarbojonin Durgotsob mandap at Radha Madhab Saha Lane in Girish Park after a downpour began around 7 pm. The pandal, themed Orob (Beyond Sound), had attracted huge crowds for its elaborate decorations.

According to preliminary accounts, hundreds of visitors had been waiting in long queues for hours when the rain began. Many rushed to find shelter, triggering a commotion in the narrow approach to the pandal. Several people fell and were trampled as the crowd surged.

Survivors described chaotic scenes as people struggled to free relatives trapped beneath others who had fallen. Some alleged that rescue assistance was delayed, leaving them struggling for nearly half an hour to pull out their loved ones.

Police, fire brigade and disaster management personnel subsequently launched rescue operations, shifting victims, many of them unconscious, to Calcutta Medical College and Hospital.

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, state health minister Sharadwat Mukherjee and Kolkata Police Commissioner Ajay Nand visited the site and the hospital to assess the situation. He said, "So far 17 people died while 25 others were injured. Among the injured, condition of two is critical. The stampede happened after a microphone announcement by the organisers. In view of the tragedy, we have decided not to get into any festivity at the government to stand by the affected."

Police closed the pandal to visitors following the tragedy. The state government launched a toll-free helpline, 18003455678, to assist affected families.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the stampede in Kolkata is extremely distressing and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

“The stampede in Kolkata is extremely distressing. My thoughts are with those who have lost their loved ones. May the injured recover at the earliest,” Modi said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, Union home minister Amit Shah had his programmes in West Bengal rescheduled for Sunday in the wake of the stampede. He will visit the hospital to meet the injured on Sunday.

In a message posted on X, Shah said,”I have just received the extremely distressing news of multiple casualties after the stampede at the Chorbagan Sarbojanin Durga Puja pandal. I have spoken with Chief Minister Shri Suvendu Adhikari about this matter.”

He prayed for the peace of the departed souls and extended deepest condolences to the bereaved families.

Shah said the administration is making arrangements to ensure best possible medical treatment for the injured.

“I am postponing all my scheduled programs in West Bengal tomorrow to visit the injured in the hospital. I pray to Ma Durga that all the injured individuals recover swiftly,” he wrote.

Former chief minister Mamata Banerjee expressed shock over the incident.

"Deeply shocked and saddened to learn about the stampede at the Chore Bagan Puja Pandal. I pray to Maa Durga for the speedy recovery of all those injured and for strength and courage for their families during this difficult time," she posted on social media.

A Trinamul Congress faction loyal to Banerjee accused the BJP-led state government of failing to ensure adequate crowd management and emergency arrangements.

"No police, no civic volunteers, no ambulances, no crowd management!" the faction alleged on X, citing accounts from local residents.

It demanded accountability from the Kolkata Police and the state administration, saying public safety could not be treated casually.

The stampede cast a shadow over the city's Durga Puja celebrations, with questions mounting over crowd-control arrangements at popular pandals.

CM Revanth to Meet Top CEOs In Delhi for Invest Telangana Summit

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

The government is stepping up efforts to attract global investors and position Telangana as a preferred investment destination. Companies proposed to be invited include Amazon Web Services, Google, Microsoft, Apple, Meta, Pfizer, Novartis, Tesla, the France-based aerospace and defence MNC Safran and ITC, among others. Of the 220 proposed members of the summit

council, 125 have accepted the government’s invitation so far. Nearly 300 representatives from 10 sectors have also agreed to participate, the sources said.

Investment roadshows have been held in Chennai and Bengaluru to promote the event. Programmes are also planned in Australia, Dubai, West Asian countries and the United States by

October 25. Roadshows will be held in Mumbai on November 3 and Ahmedabad on November 4.

The summit’s theme is “Your Investment, Our Assurance”, and its guiding concept “Pledge to Plot to Plant to Payroll to Product”. These highlight the investment process from initial

commitment and land allocation to industrial establishment, employment generation and production, the sources said.

The three-day Invest Telangana Global Summit will be organised across four halls at the Young India Skills University premises in Bharat Future City. The government is making

arrangements to accommodate delegates from India and abroad, with around 1,000 hotel rooms in



Hyderabad earmarked for participants.

The tendering process for the event, estimated to cost `150 crore, has been initiated. Outdoor courtyard works are targeted for completion by November 15, while indoor arrangements

and works at the university are scheduled to be completed by November 30. An exhibition featuring 25 leading companies from 10 sectors will showcase industrial capabilities and investment opportunities, the sources said.

The government is also planning cultural programmes showcasing Telangana’s traditions, folk arts, classical dances, fashion, handicrafts, cuisine and Bathukamma celebrations to an international audience.

Revanth Reddy has written to Union external affairs minister S. Jaishankar seeking the Centre’s cooperation in securing permissions for the conference. The Chief Minister said intellectuals, business leaders, policymakers, NRIs and academics from across the world were being invited.

The summit will feature discussions on economic development, artificial intelligence, technology, climate protection, gender equality and peace. Revanth Reddy said the conference would help strengthen Telangana’s economic and policy relations with countries across the world.

Kid’s Bomb Word Sparks Scare on Indigo Flight

HYDERABAD: A word inadvertently spoken by a 12-year-old student was taken as a bomb threat on board an IndiGo aircraft flying from Ahmedabad to Hyderabad, triggering a security alert at Shamshabad airport where it landed on Saturday.

According to the RGIA police, the aircraft was carrying 47 students from a city school who were returning home among its passengers. The student, while talking to friends, reportedly used the word while describing a movie scene. This was overheard by a crew member, who alerted the flight commander.

The crew informed air traffic control at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. The aircraft landed safely and was parked at the isolation bay, where security personnel accompanied by sniffer dogs and bomb detection squads deboarded the passengers and checked the aircraft.

After a complete sweep, authorities declared the all-clear, with no suspicious or explosive items found. During investigations, officials concluded that a misunderstanding by the crew member had caused the incident. They said a 12-year-old would not have been aware of security rules. Police clarified that no case had been booked.

Security sources at the RGIA confirmed that



the student was apparently saying “imagine if there is a bomb above the plane”.

“The student was unaware about the consequences of using the word,” a security officer told Deccan Chronicle. “said Bomb they might have explained her instead or we might have counselled her” however a case has not been registered, a security personnel disclosed.

An IndiGo official stated that the crew had followed standard protocol.

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

Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said drought-like conditions have affected 315 mandals due to rainfall deficit and El Nino impact. He sought immediate Central assistance, higher MSP procurement support, enhanced funding for water conservation works, and fertiliser subsidy reforms to help farmers.

Hyderabad: Telangana Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said on Saturday that drought-like conditions prevailed in 315 mandals in the state due to rainfall deficit and the impact of El Niño.Rao, who attended a video conference held by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said the state government directed officials to assess the condition of standing crops, conserve available water and ensure the supply of irrigation water and electricity till harvest.

He sought immediate Central assistance to take measures to deal with the drought-like conditions, an official release said.

He urged the Centre to procure maize, jowar, pulses, oilseeds and other major crops for MSP and requested the Centre to remove the 25 per cent procurement cap in the Price Support Scheme (PSS).

CM Naidu Wants Coalition Leaders To Resolve Differences During Polls Amicably

Vijayawada: Chief Minister and Telugu Desam president N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed ministers, MLAs, and coalition leaders to coordinate their efforts in ensuring the victory of alliance candidates in the forthcoming local body elections.He wanted them to improve the alliance’s vote share compared to the 2024 assembly polls. During a teleconference with party ministers and MLAs on Saturday, Chandrababu Naidu said TDP has adopted a social engineering strategy to provide representation to different social groups in the local body polls. He underlined that 11 mayoral seats being contested by Telugu Desam have been allocated to candidates from 11 different social groups. The AP CM asked alliance leaders to uphold coalition principles at the grassroots level, work together, and set aside differences.He emphasised that the victory of alliance-backed candidates must be ensured, whether in gram panchayats, mandal parishad territorial constituencies (MPTCs), zilla parishad territorial constituencies (ZPTCs) or municipalities.Naidu said candi-



date selection has taken into account public opinion and views of party cadres. He asked leaders to visit their respective constituencies, strengthen coordination, and work towards achieving the alliance’s electoral target of increasing the victory margin.

How a Chandigarh hospital sat on crores of public money and deprived poor patients



For a poor patient, the cost of getting treated does not end with the hospital bill. There is the cost of medicines, transport to hospital, and, sometimes, food and accommodation for an attendant. At Chandigarh's Government Multi-Speciality Hospital, Sector 16 (GMSH-16), a fund meant to cushion patients against precisely these hardships never reached them.During the year 2024-2025, Rs 38.57 crore of the Rs 40.44 crore available under the Rogi Kalyan Samiti (RKS) remained untouched even when it could have helped several, with just Rs 1.87 crore utilised in 2024-25 for patients welfare.At the same time, fingerprint scanners worth Rs 20.40 lakh, purchased with public money, remained dumped in the hospital store for years.The twin findings have been flagged in a government audit of the functioning of GMSH-16, pointing to a gap between the resources available with the hospital and their utilisation for patients and hospital functioning.The audit said the RKS funds were "primarily meant for patient welfare and that their non-utilisation defeated the very objective of the scheme — ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare while minimising financial hardship for patients".Under the RKS guidelines, at least two-thirds of revenue generated through service provision is to be spent on patients' welfare. The funds can be used for expenses related to treatment, transportation, diet and stay of attendants, particularly for patients from economically disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised groups.It further flagged the expenditure at GMSH-16 as being in contravention of the prescribed rules.

When the matter was raised with Dr Suman Singh, Director, Health Services, who also handles the functioning of the institute, she said there was a prescribed protocol for spending Rogi Kalyan Samiti funds and the requisite permissions had to be obtained before the money could be utilised."As and when we receive the funds and the required permissions, we utilise them. There is a procedure that has to be followed," she said.Rs 20.40 lakh scanners not used for yearsThe audit also found that 20 fingerprint scanners costing Rs 20.40 lakh were procured during 2021-22, but their utilisation was delayed for years and they remained dumped in the stores.Only one scanner was issued to the Administration Block on May 8, 2023 — nearly two years after purchase. The remaining 19 scanners continued to lie unutilised in the store till March 18, 2025, before being issued to the IT Cell on March 19, 2025.The prolonged retention, the audit observed, indicated that the requirement for the fingerprint scanners "was not assessed realistically at the time of procurement" and resulted in blockage of government funds and loss of the warranty period "without any productive use".The audit termed procurement in excess of the actual requirement irregular and in contravention of the prescribed rules, which require authorities to avoid purchasing quantities beyond requirement.Suman Singh said biometric attendance systems had now been installed at several places and at "many places, we now have fingerprint sensors as per requirement."R K Garg, activist who obtained the audit report said that the findings raise a "serious question" of accountability."When funds are specifically earmarked for patient welfare but remain unutilised, responsibility must be fixed for the failure to use them. There should be a clear explanation from the authorities concerned, along with corrective measures to ensure that public funds meant for patients are actually put to use.

Sharad Pawar seeks Rs 50,000 per hectare aid for farmers



NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Friday urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to immediately declare rain-deficit talukas across the state as drought-hit and announce a relief package of at least Rs 50,000 per hectare for the affected farmers.In a post on X, Pawar said deficient rainfall had left farmers facing a serious crisis, with standing crops such as soybean, cotton, bajra, maize, pigeon pea, green gram and black gram withering in several parts of the state. He also pointed to a rise in pest and disease attacks, warning that the situation could further affect agriculture, drinking water and fodder availability.

Pawar said the state should declare drought without waiting for the formal criteria to be met, and identify the affected talukas immediately and provide relief measures. He also sought Rs 25,000 in special assistance for each family of farm labourers.Pawar also sought the implementation of a loan waiver scheme and the release of fresh crop loans to farmers. He demanded an increase in the incentive — from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh — given to farmers who regularly repay their loans, and urged the government to bring farmers who had taken crop loans in 2025-26 but defaulted this year under the proposed loan waiver scheme.On crop insurance, Pawar demanded that the Re-1 crop insurance scheme be implemented retrospectively and that all previously excluded insurance triggers be applied retrospectively to provide coverage to farmers. He also sought distribution of crop insurance assistance of Rs 17,000 per hectare announced for losses caused by unseasonal rains last year.Pawar further urged the government to take up employment guarantee scheme works on a priority basis in talukas facing drought-like conditions, including agriculture and water conservation-related works. He sought tanker arrangements to protect fruit orchards from water shortages.The NCP(SP) chief sought the opening of fodder camps in affected areas, along with arrangements for drinking water for people, livestock and veterinary services. He also sought a special drive by the administration to ensure that repairs to faulty electricity transformers are completed promptly, citing the possibility of increased load-shedding in drought-hit areas.

'Only 389 of 1,016 voters left in 1 booth': Karnataka Congress flags SIR concerns

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has written to the state chief electoral officer, citing "serious discrepancies" in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. In a letter dated September 17, the KPCC urged immediate intervention to ensure that eligible voters were not wrongfully expelled.Highlighting irregularities in Part No 512 of the Yeshvanthapura constituency in Bengaluru, Congress leader Ramesh Babu said that of the 1,016 voters there, only 389 were listed as valid after revision—leaving nearly 62 per cent excluded. Of the total voters in the booth, 339 were marked as permanently shifted, 19 as deceased, and 265 as "unmapped" in the last SIR. "The reported figure of 389 valid voters…requires an official explanation and reconciliation," the letter said.

Similar issues are being reported statewide, he said, adding that complaints included enumeration forms not collected or uploaded, eligible voters wrongly classified as shifted, deceased entries unchecked, and poor response from booth-level officers and electoral registration officers, among others."The integrity of the electoral roll requires both accurate registration and effective protection against the wrongful exclusion of eligible voters.



Every eligible citizen must have a fair opportunity to establish their eligibility, submit the required documents, seek correction of records and participate in the electoral process," the complaint read.Congress has demanded a statewide review, polling-part-wise statistical reports, special verification of unmapped voters, confirmation of shifted and deceased classifications, and stronger grievance redressal mechanisms. It also called for transparency, adequate time for corrections, and accountability for administrative lapses.

Rs 1.9 crore, 12,600g gold, silver: What Lalbaugcha received in donations in 3 days

In the first three days of Ganeshotsav, Mumbai's iconic Lalbaugcha Raja Ganesh Mandal has received donations worth Rs 3.18 crore in cash, including US dollars, 600 grams of gold and 12,000 grams of silver jewellery.Lalbaugcha Raja is one of Mumbai's famous Sarvajanik Ganesh Mandals, attracting lakhs of devotees every year during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. Not just common people, Lalbaugcha Raja is also regularly frequented by Bollywood biggies, politicians, and business tycoons during the 10-day festival.Earlier this week, on the first day of the festival, Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the puja mandal with his family. The Ambanis, Shah Rukh Khan, his son AbRam, and actor Ranveer Singh were also spotted taking blessings at the Lalbaugcha.lalbaugcha raja donations Devotees' offerings being counted at Lalbaugcha Raja in Mumbai The donation boxes are opened every day after the puja rituals. According to the Lalbaugcha managing committee, the mandal received Rs 1.9 crore in cash in the first three days of the festival.It also received 647.47 grams of gold worth Rs 98.9 lakh, and around 12,389 grams of silver worth Rs 30.35 lakh. The total valuation of the donation stands at Rs 3.18 crore.The gold and silver donated to the Lalbaugcha include gold bangles, chains, silver pens, silver-carved cricket bats and more. The foreign exchange currencies are yet to be valued as per the day's ongoing exchange rates.

On the first day, the temple had received Rs 48.5 lakh in cash, 66.77 grams of gold and 2806 grams of silver. The next day, on September 16, the donation box



contained Rs 88.9 lakh in cash, 226.12 grams of gold and 5,516 grams of silver.On September 17, the mandal retrieved Rs 53 lakh in cash, 354.58 grams of gold and 4,067 grams of silver."The donation boxes are being opened and scrutinized by a team comprising officials of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), members of Bank of Maharashtra and the managing committee member of the Lalbaugcha Raja trust. The money received will be sent to the bank and will be used for various charitable works that are carried out by the organisation throughout the year," a member of the trust told the .The Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations started on September 14, and the 10-day-long festival will continue until Friday, September 25.

IIT Bombay locks lecture hall for overnight use, students scramble for study spaces

With mid-semester examinations underway, IIT Bombay students have raised concerns over inadequate late-night study spaces after the institute discontinued its practice of keeping rooms in the Lecture Hall Complex (LHC) open overnight during exams.Following demands from students, the administration has opened four rooms in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering as an alternative. Students, however, say the space is inadequate and lacks sufficient charging points, which are increasingly important as study material is accessed on laptops and tablets.

The issue was highlighted by Insight, IIT Bombay's student media body, which said the LHC had traditionally remained open late into the night and early morning during examinations. The facility was particularly useful for students living in hostels with limited study space and poor or no Wi-Fi connectivity.This semester, however, the administration decided to close the LHC at night, citing concerns over cleanliness and security, citing the issue of littering.Following discussions with student representatives, four rooms in the Energy department building were opened. Students were informed about the arrangement through an email on September 5, which said additional rooms could be opened depending on demand.Students said the alternative remains inadequate. "More than inadequacy of space, the reason is a lack of sufficient charging ports," said a student.



Another student said the growing dependence on digital academic material made charging facilities essential. "Lecture notes, coding assignments, book PDFs, everything is on devices, online explanations, even AI is more convenient on tabs and laptops," the student said.The institute said the arrangement was temporary and aimed at ensuring smooth conduct for preparations of examinations. "These temporary measures are being taken for proper coordination and smooth conduct of exams. This arrangement is only for the exam session," the administration said.

BRS-Congress face-off sharpens in Telangana as police arrest social media convenor

Political tensions between the Telangana Congress government and the Opposition BRS escalated after police arrested party social media convenor Manne Krishank over a post linked to an Assembly protest.: Political tensions between the Telangana Congress government and the Opposition BRS escalated after police arrested party social media convenor Manne Krishank over a post linked to an Assembly protest.Tensions between the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the Congress government escalated in Telangana Friday after a large contingent of police surrounded the house of BRS leader and social media convenor Manne Krishank and arrested him over a social media post.

Krishank was booked over a social media post on the ruckus inside and outside the Legislative Assembly during a BRS protest against the state government earlier this month. He was questioned and released on September 17.Meanwhile, speaking to the media after appearing before an Anti-Corruption Bureau court in connection with the Formula E case, KTR accused the Revanth Reddy government of targeting Opposition leaders.

"For the last three years, ever since the Congress government came to power, its entire focus has been on targeting the Opposition. The government has been trying to harass and trouble KCR and the leadership of the BRS party. After coming to power, the government should have focused on how to implement its manifesto and fulfil the promises it made to the people," KTR told the media after the court appearance. "The Congress government made tall promises to farmers — including a Rs 2 lakh loan waiver, Rs 15,000 Rythu Bharosa, and a bonus for farmers — but has failed to fulfil them."Stating that he has been cooperating fully with the investigation and attending court whenever summoned, KTR said his former chief minister father K Chandrashekar Rao and his family were targets of "malicious propaganda" by the Revanth Reddy government."The Formula E race was an initiative that brought a good name to Hyderabad and Telangana. The Formula E race was an effort to attract large-scale investments into the electric vehicle sector. The race was organised as part of efforts to bring investments to Telangana, but the government is now making allegations against it. I have appeared before the court twice in the Formula E race case."I will cooperate with the court and will appear for the inquiry whenever I am called," he stated.



The Formula E race case against KTR involves the transfer of Rs 45 crore to a foreign company, Formula-E Organisers (FOE), in February 2023, when KTR was minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, and Hyderabad hosted the Formula E race, an international electric car racing event. After the Congress came to power in 2023, the ACB booked him in December 2024 under the Prevention of Corruption Act as well as IPC Sections 409 (criminal breach of trust) and 120B (criminal conspiracy).

The ACB alleges that KTR failed to take clearance from the state Cabinet before authorising former Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) principal secretary Arvind Kumar to pay Rs 45 crore to FOE. It also alleges that the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HMDA) paid Rs 45 crore in two instalments to FOE.The money transfers, made in sterling, allegedly violated Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rules, which resulted in a fine of Rs 8 crore being imposed on the Telangana government, then headed by KTR's father, KCR.

The ruckus broke out earlier this month during a BRS protest against the state government, with a confrontation between BRS members and police reported both inside and outside the Assembly premises. The protest, over the government's policies and alleged failure to fulfil its poll promises, led to a series of cases and counter-allegations between the ruling Congress and the Opposition BRS.On September 7, BRS legislators who were wearing black T-shirts with anti-Congress slogans were stopped from entering the state Assembly, leading to a scuffle with the police. Krishank was booked over a social media post over a social-media

How human activity altered Mumbai climate

A recent study found that on 86 out of 92 days between June 1 and August 31, human activity, such as vehicle and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, influenced local weather patterns in Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, contributing to climate change.The study indicates that during the specified period, the cities recorded extreme heat and rainfall that were directly influenced by man-made factors that contribute to climate change.The report also shows that after Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, districts in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), including Dombivali and Thane, had as many as 81 days affected by human activity, followed by 79 in Kalyan and 76 days each in Pimpri, Pune and Shivaji Nagar.Mumbai Monsoons, Mumbai rains, Mumbai climate, Mumbai climate conditions, Mumbai weather, Navi Mumbai, Navi Mumbai climate, Climate change, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Mumbai news, Maharashtra news, Indian express, current affairsFurthermore, the study stated that out of the 86 days, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai recorded extreme heat days on 28 days.Of the 59 analysed cities, the top nine cities featuring in the list were from Maharashtra, with the MMR region recording the most days where significant weather patterns, such as temperature and rainfall, were driven by human activity.The report, published by Climate Central, a US-based climate research organisation, comes weeks after the United Nations published a study highlighting Mumbai's growing vulnerability to rising sea levels.Notably, the months coincide with Mumbai's monsoon season, when the region usually cools down due to incessant rains. However, in 2026, Mumbai recorded deficit rainfall in June and August, but surpassed its average quota in July.In the latest report, scientists used a climate shift index (CSI) to identify the impact of climate change on daily temperatures. By analysing temperatures and weather patterns, the scientists placed cities between a CSI level of zero-5 – zero being the lowest impact and 4 and 5 showing a severe impact.For Mumbai, the average markings ranged between 4 and 5 throughout this period. During the period, Indian cities recorded an average increase of 0.7 degrees in day temperatures.Speaking to Mahesh Palawat, climate scientist and meteorologist, said that the warmer temperatures during monsoon months were caused directly by El-Niño – a climate pattern that warms the surface waters of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.However, man-made climate change has played a major role in altering the current rainfall pattern."The El Niño effect was very strong in India this year. Due to this factor, every state in the country has recorded uneven rainfall distribution, which has led to a rise in temperature between June and August. This factor was further aggravated by man-made issues like vehicular emissions and industrial practices, which contribute to the increase in local temperatures," Palawat told Express.Another concern for Indian subcontinentPalawat said there is another case of concern for the Indian subcontinent. Earlier, during the monsoon, there was an even distribution of rainfall. Data now shows that in the last 4-5 years, Mumbai has recorded heavy downpours where a single day's rainfall totals 100-200 mm."This phenomenon is mainly caused by the absence of Alto Strauss Cloud. These clouds would exist 800-1,000 feet above the surface and would create consistent drizzle over the cities, making rainfall uniform. However, due to factors like industrial emissions

BKC's pod taxi 'economically inefficient': 129 architects register opposition

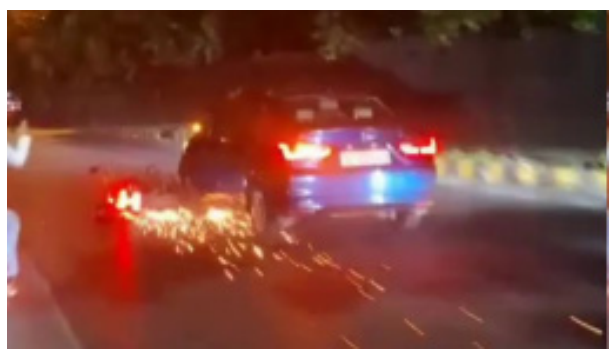


As work continues on the Bandra Kurla Complex's (BKC) pod taxi, connecting Bandra to Kurla, prominent architects recently wrote to metropolitan commissioner Sanjay Mukherjee to reconsider the Rs 1,016 crore project, calling it "economically inefficient" due to its "low capacity".Signed by several prominent architects, including Brinda Somaya, Rahul Kadri, PK Das, Vivek Pai, Vikas Dilawari, Abraham John, and Nondita Correa Mehrotra, it says, "At a projected fare of approximately Rs 21 per kilometre, the Personal Rapid Transit System operates as an exclusive, high-cost transit mode rather than an inclusive mass transit solution."

"Spending over 1,016 crore on a low-capacity system (4-6 passengers per pod) that caters primarily to a limited demographic is economically inefficient. Also, this decreases the carrying capacity of the roads below," the architects under the Mumbai Architects Collective wrote.Requesting a meeting to discuss the pod taxi project, the Collective detailed several construction-related environmental concerns, including dumping debris in Bandra East's Urban Plaza and City Park and damaging tree cover along road medians and through mangroves.Construction of the first phase of BKC's pod taxi started in May, with around 140 piers underway. The first phase will cover 3.36 km, with two disconnected arms from Bandra East and Kurla, each covering four stations.

These include Bandra East, Kalanagar, MMRDA Old Building, Excise Department from Bandra East, and Bharat Diamond Bourse Gate 11, MMRDA Pay & Park, LBS Marg, and Kurla, due by the end of 2027.Work on the ground has only begun in Bandra East due to monsoon and traffic complications.Residents have flagged that the Urban Plaza and City Park, a public open space, has been barricaded and is being used like a "civil dump yard and equipment staging area" for the construction; and that the project stands to affect 499 trees along the road medians.Additionally, 041 hectares of mangroves may also be cut for the project.The architects wrote, "Excavations along road medians threaten local trees and fail to mitigate localized microclimate disruptions, loss of canopy coverage, and 'Urban Heat Island' escalation in BKC," questioning the need for the low-capacity pod taxi.Mumbai's prime business district, BKC, sees footfall of four to six lakh people every day – and it is expected to grow with the start of the bullet train.The MMRDA estimates that the pod taxi will carry 1.09 lakh passengers by 2031. Now, urban planners and transport experts have pointed out that high ridership would not solve the traffic problem in BKC.

Car hits bike, drags it half a km in Delhi's RK Puram; 73-year-old arrested



A 73-year-old man was arrested after his car allegedly hit a parked motorcycle in South Delhi's RK Puram on Wednesday night, dragging it for around half a kilometre.Police said its rider fell on the road and escaped without serious injuries. Passersby had chased the car along Africa Avenue and forced the driver to stop.The incident took place around 10 pm when the car was travelling from Bhikaji Cama Place towards R K Puram Metro Station. Police received information about the accident at 10.22 pm and a team from the RK Puram police station reached the spot.According to police, Tanish Tokas, 21, a resident of Munirka village, was sitting on the motorcycle parked by the roadside when a blue Honda Amaze allegedly driven by Venu Gopal, a resident of Vasant Kunj, hit him.

The impact caused Tokas to fall off the two-wheeler. Police said the motorcycle was subsequently dragged by the car for some distance.A three-minute video recorded by people at the spot showed commuters following the vehicle as it dragged the bike, causing sparks on the road, and eventually forcing the driver to stop.The video shows people surrounding the car and asking the driver to step out. Gopal can be seen folding his hands and apologising during the confrontation. Some people allegedly slapped him.Police said Tokas was medically examined and did not sustain any serious injuries. The accused was examined as well and no alcohol was detected in his system.A case has been registered for rash driving or riding on a public way and rash or negligent act that endangers human life or personal safety and causes simple hurt.

NTA's move to find hotels for outstation officials near Central Delhi office

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has floated a tender to empanel hotels to lodge outstation officials visiting Delhi for various work. The agency has specified that the hotels must be within a 5 km radius of NTA's new office on Minto Road in Central Delhi."NTA requires a panel of hotels in the vicinity of the new office for accommodation of outstation officials, examination observers/ City Coordinators, Governing Body/Committee members, resource persons, and other official visitors, on an as-and-when-required basis," the exam body said in the tender issued on Thursday.

NTA has relocated to the Government of India Press building on Minto Road from its earlier address in Okhla. NTA said the empanelled hotels shall provide accommodation on a room-only or room-with-breakfast basis, as booked, to NTA officials/guests as and when required, at the rates agreed upon."Bookings shall be made by NTA's Administration/Con-Ops Division directly with the empanelled hotel(s), specifying dates, number of rooms, and category required. There is no minimum guaranteed business committed to any empanelled hotel; bookings shall be placed purely on the basis of actual requirement, availability, and suitability," the NTA said in the tender notice.

NTA also said empanelled hotels may be required to provide, on request and at mutually agreed additional



rates, facilities such as conference and meeting rooms and pick-up from the airport or railway station.It said the hotels should be rated 3-star or equivalent, with a minimum of 20 rooms available for empanelment. The hotels should have fire safety clearance, FSSAI licence, GST registration and other required civic approvals.The agency, which conducts all-India competitive exams such as NEET, JEE Mains and others, jas also invited an expression of interest from academics, scientists, researchers and others to join a three-year panel of Subject Matter Experts for setting question papers, translation, vetting, moderation, answer key verification, curriculum mapping, research, psychometric validation and other confidential academic assignments.

St Stephen's student rams car into Delhi worksite, 3 labourers killed

Three construction workers were killed, and another was critically injured after a speeding vehicle, allegedly driven by a 20-year-old Delhi University student, crashed into a worksite on Dwarka Expressway early on Thursday, police have said. The driver, identified as Vedant Khanna, a third-year student of Economics Honours at St. Stephen's College, has suffered serious injuries in the incident and is in hospital.According to senior officers, the incident occurred between 1.50 am and 2.30 am near Ram Chowk. A group of labourers was installing an iron fence on the central median when a white hatchback with a Delhi registration plate, coming from Delhi, hit the workers, police said.

Police identified the dead as Bijender Singh (58), his cousin Pappu Singh (55) and site contractor Satish Chand (43). All three, along with the injured worker, Ram Kumar (28), were from Sarvana village in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district. The men moved to Gurugram just two days ago and lived together in a rented accommodation in nearby Bajghera. Ram Kumar is currently in the ICU of a private hospital.An FIR was registered after a complaint by Chand's brother, Jitender Kumar, who was also working at the site. The complaint says the work site was clearly demarcated with standard safety gear, including reflective warning boards, barricades, and trestles.

What the complaint saysThe complaint says that while two workers were pouring concrete into the foundation at the base of the median, others were supporting the iron railing panels. The speeding car struck the safety barriers, ran over the workers on the divider, slammed into a pickup truck parked ahead, and mounted the median before coming to a stop.The impact pushed the



parked utility truck forward by over 100 metres, and the car was crumpled. Passersby and workers who escaped the crash notified emergency services, and police and ambulances reached the scene. The injured were rushed to the Civil Hospital, where Bijender and Pappu were declared dead. Chand succumbed to his injuries later that night.Khanna was initially transported to a local hospital before being shifted to a private facility. While the complainant and other workers have alleged that Khanna appeared drunk, police said this could only be confirmed after forensic reports. Gurugram Police's Public Relations Officer Sandeep Turan said blood samples have been collected to confirm whether the driver was under the influence of alcohol or other substances.The vehicles involved in the crash have been impounded. Based on Kumar's statement, an FIR has been registered against Khanna under sections relating to causing death by negligence, rash driving, act endangering life or personal safety, among others.

Bribes for Karnataka vet posts funded Rs 52 lakh jewellery for IAS officer's friend: CID

A CID probe into the money trail of the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) veterinary doctor recruitment scam has allegedly found that bribes paid by some aspirants to a middleman were used to purchase jewellery worth Rs 52 lakh for a friend of a senior IAS officer who served as the commission's exam controller.Public Prosecutor K L Bhagyalakshmi presented the CID's findings before a Bengaluru court on Thursday during a hearing of a bail plea filed by the middleman, Basavaraj Kannale.

According to the CID, arrested IAS officer Gyanendra Kumar Gangwar diverted Rs 52 lakh of funds collected from 11 aspirants—who paid around Rs 70 lakh through RTGS bank transfers to accounts indicated by Kannale—to a Bhima Gold store for purchasing gold and diamond jewellery.The CID presented records of accounts in cooperative banks in the Bidar region where aspirants allegedly transferred funds and the subsequent transfer of funds to a gold showroom. The CID also submitted CCTV pictures of Gangwar and his female friend purchasing gold jewellery worth Rs 21 lakh and gold and diamond jewellery worth Rs 23 lakh on different occasions at the gold showroom earlier this year."The money paid through online transfers by some of the aspirants was deposited in accounts of friends of the accused in the Om Lakshmi Souharda Sahakari Sangh Niyamit Bank. The funds were then transferred to a gold store for purchase of Rs 52 lakh worth of gold and diamond jewellery by the controller of the exams," Bhagyalakshmi told the court.Rs 11 lakh spent on air travel, funds withdrawn in UPCID sources said that, as per the probe, 11 aspirants paid around Rs 70 lakh in bank transfers and the remainder in black money to Kannale.Apart from the Rs 52 lakh allegedly used to purchase jewellery, around Rs 11 lakh was used for air travel by Gangwar's female friend and some funds were withdrawn through an ATM in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, where the IAS officer is from, the CID told the court.The CID has also presented evidence suggesting a close association between Kannale and Gangwar: CCTV footage of Kannale visiting the IAS officer's apartment and their phone call records.Kannale, who worked as an accountant in an agricultural banana market in Bengaluru for a monthly salary of Rs 20,000, has seen a meteoric rise in his wealth and businesses, especially following his association with Gangwar, who became the KPSC exam controller in 2024 and served in the position till March 2026, CID sources said. Kannale and Gangwar became acquainted around 2019 when the IAS officer served as the chief executive officer of Bidar, Kannale's home district.

The CID has seized as many as 13 bank accounts linked to Kannale, who identifies himself as a BJP worker and served as a personal aide to former BJP minister Dr Ashwathnarayan. A total of Rs 67 lakh has been frozen in the accounts. "The mastermind (in the exam fraud) is Kannale, who brings in the aspirants, collects funds, deposits the funds in the bank accounts of friends and distributes them," Bhagyalakshmi told the court on Thursday.



The CID refuted Kannale's claims seeking bail because his wife was pregnant, stating that he was arrested at the Delhi airport on August 30 while he was allegedly set to flee to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with visas valid till November 13. Kannale's arrest came on the basis of information provided by Gangwar, who was arrested on August 29, the CID said.Middleman allegedly offered leaked papers to 29 aspirantsKannale, identified by the CID as the mastermind of the fraud, allegedly approached 29 of the 1,400 aspirants for the 400 veterinary doctor posts with offers of providing the question papers for the entrance exams conducted on January 8 and 9 this year. Kannale allegedly exploited his ties with Gangwar to obtain the questions and leaked them to 11 aspirants who paid between Rs 35 lakh and Rs 80 lakh."Aspirants from different parts of Karnataka came to Bengaluru before the exam and were taken to a resort on the outskirts by the middlemen a day before the exam. At the resort they were confined to different rooms and provided the questions for the exam. They were trained to answer and transported to the exam venue the next day," a CID source said.According to the FIR registered in the case following a complaint by Dr S Manjunath, a veterinary doctor who was not selected, 29 aspirants who scored poorly in college exams scored unusually high marks (in the range of 450 plus out of 500) in the entrance exams. Of the 1,400 aspirants who wrote the exam, 329 were selected."All communications between the involved parties were carried out through encrypted channels, ensuring confidentiality and security. It appears that the question papers were provided to the candidates in both handwritten and printed formats," the source added. "The mediators took responsibility for coordinating transport, including collecting and dropping off the candidates."Suspended KPSC head cooperating

Uddhav Thackeray says dragging his name into Disha Salian case politically motivated

Sena UBT chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday alleged that dragging his name into the Disha Salian case was "politically motivated" and warned of taking legal action if the "character assassination" did not stop.Uddhav's remark came a day after Sena UBT MLA Aaditya Thackeray denied ever knowing or meeting Disha Salian."My name is mentioned (in the FIR). Tomorrow yours will be too. There is no connection whatsoever, direct or indirect. How long are we supposed to endure this? Tomorrow Narendra Modi and Donald Trump's names might be added too. Why is my name being dragged into this? It is politically motivated. We remained silent, but enough with this cheap character assassination. Otherwise, we will take legal recourse as well. We have no connection to this matter," the Sena (UBT chief said in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, where he addressed a rally on the occasion of Marathwada Liberation Day.

Following the directives from the Bombay High Court, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered an FIR in the Disha Salian case based on the statement given by her father, Satish Salian. The FIR mentions the names of several individuals, including Uddhav Thackeray, Aaditya Thackeray, former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, Sachin Waze, actor Sooraj Pancholi, Dino Morea, and Rhea Chakraborty, among others.A former celebrity manager, Disha Salian had worked with actor Sushant Singh Rajput. She died in June 2020, after falling from a high-rise residential building in Mumbai, days before the actor's death.

On Wednesday, Aaditya Thackeray had denied even knowing Disha Salian. "To clear the air and put an end to rumors, I am stating the pure facts once again. I have never met Disha Salian, nor did I know her. For the past six years, certain individuals have been deliberately attempting to link my name to this tragic incident due to political motives, personal enmity, and an intent to malign my character, despite there being zero evidence or connection. This continuous false campaign, lacking any facts or truth, is unfortunate."Meanwhile, Uddhav Thackeray alleged that the "mystery" surrounding Gopinath Munde's death needs to be unraveled.Raising doubts over the former Union Minister's death, Thackeray said, "Munde's death remains a mystery. He could not sit in the Lok Sabha even for a single day as a Union Minister."The Sena (UBT) chief said leaders like Pramod Mahajan and Gopinath Munde built the BJP's roots in Maharashtra but could not enjoy power.Supporting Thackeray's views, Congress leader Nana Patole said,"We continuously raised our stance regarding Ajit Pawar in the Assembly, but even a simple FIR could not be registered. What is being hidden? Uddhav Thackeray mentioned Gopinath Munde. Munde Saheb was a great leader. He raised the question of whether his death was due to an accident or foul play. The government should investigate this so that everything becomes crystal clear," Patole said.Munde at died in a car accident when he was heading to Delhi airport to catch a flight to Beed in June 2014.



KTR's PRO Mahesh Manikya Mudiraj released after Bolarum police notice

Hyderabad: BRS working president K.T.Rama Rao's public relations officer Mahesh Manikya Mudiraj was released by the Bolarum police on Friday morning, after serving him a notice under Section 35(3) of the BNSS.He had been taken from Saifabad police station to Bolarum police station on Thursday night in connection with a case alleging obstruction of police duties.Mahesh had earlier appeared before Saifabad police after being served a notice in connection with a separate case registered over an alleged incident at the Telangana Assembly on September 7.The Saifabad police had booked Mahesh and KTR's personal assistant Mahender for allegedly abusing and threatening a reserve inspector and obstructing him from performing their duties.While Mahesh was at Saifabad police station, Bolarum police took him into custody in connection with another case registered over an incident on September 8.Police had stopped BRS leaders at the Bolarum check-post while they were proceeding towards former



EYE SECRETS

Editorial

Fresh hope for Naga settlement

The appointment of a new interlocutor raises hopes of reviving the Naga peace process, the longest-running insurgency negotiation in India. The Centre has picked retired IPS officer Ajit Lal, former Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), as its interlocutor and also agreed to include a Union Minister or group of Union Ministers in the negotiation framework — a long-standing demand of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM). More than a quarter century after the NSCN-IM signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre in 1997, when the peace talks began, the negotiations remain deadlocked. In 2015, the Centre signed a Framework Agreement aimed at resolving the Naga political issue. The crux of the stalemate lies in the twin demands of the Naga representatives: a separate constitution and a flag. Hopefully, the peace process will get the required momentum as the Centre has, for the first time, included Union Ministers in the negotiating team. In October last year, the 92-year-old NSCN (IM) supremo Thuingaleng Muivah had threatened to revive the insurgency if their demands were not met. The Framework Agreement between the Government of India and NSCN-IM recognised the "unique history and situation" of the Nagas, but left core issues unresolved. The Centre has, however, made it clear that it cannot grant the demands for a separate constitution and a flag. As recently as last month, Muivah reiterated that sovereignty, a flag and a constitution remained the group's key demands.By agreeing to political-level talks and naming a senior intelligence veteran as pointsman, the Centre is signalling its willingness to give political assurances and simultaneously build popular pressure in Nagaland where patience is wearing thin. For people of Nagaland, the ceasefire, in effect since 1997, means that two generations have grown up without conflict but also without any tangible solution. The ceasefire is increasingly being described as an endless waiting room. The NSCN(I-M) has rejected all alternatives, including a cultural flag instead of a national flag and dealing with issues of a constitution after signing the final agreement. This means the issues of the flag and constitution remain unresolved. The other issues on the table include a Naga army, a separate currency, and Nagalim (integration of Naga-inhabited areas into Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur). While the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs), a conglomeration of at least seven different groups, have agreed to accept a political solution and continue the dialogue, the NSCN-IM has been rigid on its demand for a separate flag and constitution. This stand is delaying a final solution to the decades-old negotiations.

Delhi protests hit festive sales in Khan Market, traders claim Rs 7 crore daily losses



Traders in Delhi's Khan Market said the ongoing protests by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) has affected business and deterred customers during the festive season — a time when they expect better sales and income — leading to losses of at least Rs 5-7 crore a day.Anshu Tandon, President of the Khan Market Welfare Association told The Indian Express, "There is already an economic slowdown, and these protests are causing further damage. There is hardly any footfall, and people are apprehensive of stepping out."

CJP's October 10 protest demanding Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation saw massive disruptions across Central Delhi — 45 Delhi Metro stations were closed, almost 250 railway trains arriving at or leaving New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin stations were cancelled, mobile Internet was shut down for 24 hours, and layers of barricades were put up across the streets of the capital.The New Delhi Traders Association had issued an advisory asking shops, offices and restaurants in Connaught Place to remain closed as a precautionary measure. The Delhi government had earlier shut down liquor stores in the city on Friday and Saturday.

Speaking about the scale of losses, Tandon said traders in Khan Market were incurring losses of at least Rs 5-7 crore a day. "If you include rent, the losses would be around Rs 50 crore… The situation is becoming increasingly difficult for traders… especially those who operate from rented premises. They have to pay rent, salaries and meet other expenses even when business is down."Traders in the market sympathised with those in Connaught Place, where police barricading and traffic restrictions have compounded the impact of the protests on commercial activity.Tandon said that while the right to protest was fundamental, it was equally important to ensure that the law was upheld and public life was not brought to a standstill."People have a right to protest, and those who are protesting are the future of this country. However, the law of the land must be upheld, and there has to be decorum in the way these things are done. Ordinary citizens and people cannot be made to suffer," he said.Meanwhile, ahead of CJP's 'Lehra Do Tiranga' gathering at Central Park in CP on Friday, an argument broke out on Thursday night between some traders in Connaught Place and a few protesters. Videos purportedly showed the exchange between traders and protesters but there was no reported violence or complaint in connection with the incident.The protests have also prompted Connaught Place traders and vendors to move court.On Thursday, the Delhi High Court heard a PIL by Delhi resident Anil Kumar Gupta. Gupta claimed he was espousing the cause of street vendors and small traders whose businesses "have been severely hampered and affected by regular protests and agitations in and around the Jantar Mantar area".The court recorded the Delhi Police's assurance that it would take necessary steps to regulate the gathering and maintain law and order.

20% reduction ordered across Khadakwasla dam supply



The Pune district administration has announced a 20 per cent water cut across the region from the Khadakwasla dam complex following reduced monsoon rainfall and projected El Niño conditions.District Collector Jitendra Dudi on Friday stated that the 20 per cent reduction applies uniformly to all stakeholders, including the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), irrigation departments, and other local authorities. Meanwhile, the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) will continue its existing 10 per cent water cut.

Citing India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasts, Dudi warned that intensifying El Niño effects from December could delay next year's monsoon."Therefore, water management needs to be done in such a way that if there is no rain till August 31 next year, we should still have sufficient water," he said.

Highlighting the severity of the deficit, Dudi noted that while local dams typically achieve 100 per cent capacity by October 15, usable water levels in the Khadakwasla reservoir currently stand at just 82 per cent.The water level in Pavna dam stood at 95% and a 10% water cut would continue for water from that dam. "It will be very important for the municipal corporations to conserve water so that during April, May, June, in summer, we should have enough water," Dudi said.The Collector also raised concerns about illegal usage of potable water and said flying squads would be set up to prevent their misuse.The collector added that approximately 80% of the crop damage assessment had been completed in the district, and the administration aims to finalize all assessments by Sunday. Following this, a request for financial assistance will be submitted to the government, with the administration working to ensure that farmers receive government aid before Diwali, Dudi said.

For the past 15 days, joint teams comprising officials from the Revenue, Rural Development, and Agriculture departments have been conducting crop damage assessments across every taluka.According to a review conducted this morning, most assessments in the district are complete. In Ambegaon and Junnar—talukas recently declared drought-affected—the administration had already begun the assessment process. Consequently, about 60-70 per cent of the work has been finished in these areas as well.Dudi said that while addressing the current drought, the administration is focusing on the strategic management of water reserves in the district's dams, keeping potential future water shortages in mind.

"Given this situation, it is essential to ensure the prudent and well-planned utilisation of the water currently stored in the district's various dams," he said. District Collector Dudi stated that the focus will be on water planning to ensure an adequate supply for citizens, even if a rainfall deficit persists until August 31, 2027."In terms of water usage, priority will be given first to drinking water, followed by allocations for agriculture and other needs," he said.He highlighted that the district administration is actively working to address drought conditions through measures such as completing assessments of crop damage, requesting funds from the government, and implementing long-term management of available water reserves.

Booze bottles on post-mortem table: Inquiry launched into 'party' at Pimpri's YCM Hospital



The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) administration has launched an investigation after a viral video surfaced showing an alleged liquor party inside the post-mortem department of YCM Hospital in Pimpri.The viral footage shows liquor bottles, drinks, snacks, and food plates placed directly on top of a post-mortem table, with an individual fast asleep on an adjacent sofa.The incident came to light when a person—who was kept waiting overnight to collect a death certificate—recorded himself attempting to wake up medical personnel who appeared to be in a state of stupor. In the video, the person is heard pleading with the sleeping official after waiting for hours.

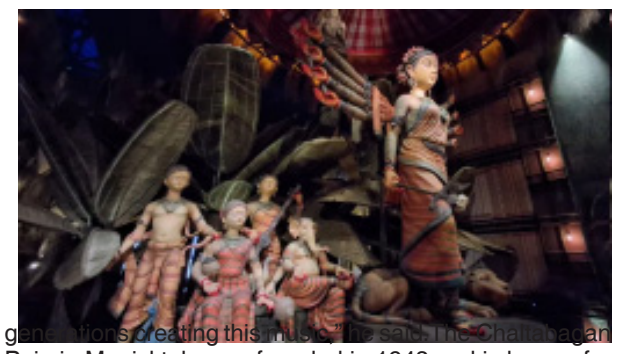
"The video has come to us…We are looking into it. We will investigate the matter and take appropriate action," Maruti Gaikwad, acting dean of YCM Hospital and Medical College, told on Friday.Dr Gaikwad noted he took temporary charge recently while regular dean Dr Rajendra Wable recovers from a medical procedure."I am actually not aware of the medical officer who is seen sleeping on the sofa. I have taken the charge temporarily just a few days back. But we will investigate the matter and find out what has actually happened," he said.As the second-largest public healthcare facility in Pune district with a 750-bed capacity, PCMC-run YCM Hospital serves patients from Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune city, and neighboring talukas including Maval, Mulshi, Khed, Ambegaon, and Junnar.The controversy marks the second recent lapse at YCM Hospital, where earlier a patient slid out of a moving ambulance during an inter-hospital transfer. The "homeless" patient was being taken to Sassoon Hospital, as the YCM Hospital as it did not have the facility of septic OT. The hospital administration had asked the private contractor to take action against the ambulance driver and the staff accompanying the patient.

How 'Ram' tattoos in caste fight are defining a Kolkata Durga Puja pandal

Over a century ago, Dalits in present-day Chhattisgarh were denied entry to a temple. In a stunning act of spiritual defiance, they turned their body into a temple by tattooing 'Ram' all over. They were then called Ramnamis.More than 130 years later and 800 km away, a Durga Puja pandal in Kolkata this year celebrates the Ramnamis, their defiance and their devotion.The Ramnamis trace the birth of their sect to end of the 19th century, when a Dalit man named Parasuram tattooed 'Ram' on his face and body after he was denied entry to a temple. The message was that God is everywhere and belongs to all. This moved others from the Dalit community, and a sect was born.Other accounts stress that the sect may be older and draw a link with the 15th-Century Bhakti Movement.Called Ramnamis, they carry Lord Ram's name on their bodies. From head to toe, and even on eyelids, Ramnamis etched 'Ram' on every inch of their skin.Over the past few decades, Ramnamis have opted for fewer tattoos, and only a handful of the sect's members now have nakh-sikh tattoos, meaning head-to-toe. Many new-age Ramnamis have had to migrate to cities for jobs, and head-to-toe tattoos may not meet professional requirements, especially in spaces unaware of the Ramnami context.Younger members of the community still recite Ram's name and carry some tattoos, and this flexibility may well help the core traditions survive.The Chaltabagan Durga Puja in north Kolkata is celebrating its 84th edition this year. In August, the Puja committee announced its theme, Nishan, a celebration of the Ramnami heritage. While Ramnamis are the face of the Puja, a composition by renowned Hindustani classical musician Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt is its voice.

Artist Aditi Chakraborty, who conceived the theme, said, "Nishan traces godna, the tattoo, as one of India's oldest acts of faith, protection and quiet protest, the mark a person carries when there is nothing else to carry. The thematic narrative spans communities and geographies: the Baiga woman's ornament that poverty cannot take away; the healing 'Jahar Ulki' of Latehar, the protective and magical designs of the south; and the fertility motifs whose geometry echoes, remarkably, in the 9 plants of the Nabapatrika that Bengal has worshipped for centuries."Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt said, "When the committee described this theme to me, I recognised it at once as 'nishan (mark) and naad (sound)'. A raga is also a mark; you cannot see it, but it is inscribed, passed from teacher to student, carried for a lifetime. The Ramnamis write the name on the skin; we write it in the air with naad (musical sound). I have tried to compose something that holds both: the sound of a chant that has been repeated for a hundred years, and the sound of an instrument (Mohan Veena) that did not exist before I made it."The Grammy-winning musician said three generations of the Bhatt family worked on the composition. "I composed the music, then my son Saurabh did all the arrangement, mixing, recording, everything.

And then, Mohan Veena was played by me and my grandson Atharva. So this is a unique thing, I think, three



generations creating this music," he said. The Chaltabagan Puja in Manicktala was founded in 1943 and is known for the creative theme it explores in its pandals. Over the years, it has amassed several awards.Industrialist and BJP leader Shishir Bajoria, who is associated with the Chaltabagan Durga Puja, said, "Chaltabagan has never been content to build a pandal; they try to build an idea and then invite the city to walk through it. Durga Puja does not belong to one street, one city or one country anymore. It is celebrated wherever Bengalis and friends of Bengal have made a home," he said.Announcing the launch of a Durga Puja Connect app to take the festival to those outside Kolkata, he said, "Durga Puja Connect is our attempt to give that scattered celebration a single address—so that a family in Kolkata, a student in Berlin and a doctor in New Jersey can stand, for a few days each autumn, in the same room."

No more loose turmeric, chilli on sale? Tukaram Mundhe's move puts spice sellers on alert



The order applies to spices such as turmeric, chilli, coriander, cumin, black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, asafoetida, saffron, poppy seeds, garam masala, curry powder and other spice products.

In yet another crackdown on adulteration, the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA), led by Tukaram Mundhe, has banned the sale of spice powders and mixed spices in loose, unpacked form and directed a statewide crackdown on adulteration, prohibited colours, and unhygienic production practices.In a comprehensive compliance order dated October 15, the food safety regulator has made packing and sealing of such products at the place of production mandatory before distribution and sale.The order applies to spices such as turmeric, chilli, coriander, cumin, black pepper, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, asafoetida, saffron, poppy seeds, garam masala, curry powder and other spice products.

The FDA has also prohibited unauthorised colours and harmful substances such as Metanil Yellow, Rhodamine B, Sudan dyes, and lead chromate."Action will also be taken against the mixing of brick powder, chalk, sawdust, foreign starch and other unauthorised substances to increase the weight or quantity of spices, as well as the sale of spices from which extracts have been removed," said FDA commissioner Tukaram Mundhe."To improve hygiene, spices must not be dried on public roads, tarred surfaces, drains, near garbage bins or close to cattle sheds. Production and storage premises must be clean, dry and pest-free, and spices must be protected from contamination. Storing chemicals, pesticides and industrial colours alongside spices is prohibited," Tukaram Mundhe added.The food safety body has directed food safety officers across Maharashtra to inspect spice businesses and record inspections, samples and enforcement action.

10-year-old throws toddler from 6th floor, rides cycle afterwards. CCTV reveals horror



An 18-month-old girl died after she was allegedly pushed into an open duct from the sixth floor of a Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) building by her 10-year-old neighbour in Goregaon (East) on Wednesday night, police said.The Dindoshi police are investigating the incident, which came to light after CCTV footage from the building was examined.The police have registered an accidental death report (ADR) and produced the 10-year-old girl before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), which will conduct an inquiry and decide on the further course of action.According to the police, the incident occurred around 9.30 pm. The toddler was playing in the common passage on the sixth floor of the building, where she lived with her parents. The 10-year-old girl, who lives in a neighbouring flat, was also present in the passage and allegedly pushed the toddler into an open duct, causing her to fall to the ground floor.When the toddler did not return home after some time, her mother asked her elder son to check where she was playing. The boy stepped out of the flat but could not find his sister on the sixth floor.He then looked down towards the ground floor and noticed a crowd gathered around his sister, who was lying on the ground. He rushed back to inform his mother, who immediately went downstairs and took her to a hospital, where she was declared dead, a police officer said.The police were informed, and a team from the Dindoshi police station reached the spot. During an examination of the CCTV footage, the police allegedly found the 10-year-old girl pushing the toddler into the duct, a police officer said.Police said she was allegedly seen running away from the spot afterwards. She was later seen riding a bicycle in the passage on the same floor, the officer added.Another police officer alleged that the family members of the 10-year-old girl switched off the CCTV cameras in an attempt to conceal the incident. The body was sent for a post-mortem examination, police said."

Paddy worth Rs.9.68 crore missing from Nagarkurnool rice mill

Nagarkurnool: Paddy worth approximately Rs.9.68 crore, allotted by the government for custom milling, has gone missing from a parboiled rice mill on the outskirts of Nagarkurnool town, following which a case has been registered against 13 persons.

Civil Supplies and Vigilance & Enforcement officials conducted surprise inspections at the mill on Wednesday and found a significant discrepancy between the stock recorded in the books and the quantity physically available.Preliminary investigations indicated that the paddy had been diverted and sold in the open market for personal gain, officials said.Following a complaint lodged by Civil Supplies officials, the police registered a case against 13 persons, including the mill owners, operators and others associated with the mill, at Nagarkurnool Police Station under the Essential Commodities Act.The accused have been taken into custody and are being questioned, police said.During the Kharif season, paddy procured from farmers was allocated to rice mills across the district for custom milling.

Warren Buffett steps down as Berkshire Hathaway chairman; son Howard takes over



Warren Buffett is stepping down as chairman of Berkshire Hathaway after serving in the role for more than 50 years. The company said Friday that the 96-year-old Buffett will become chairman emeritus and will take on his new role immediately."Father Time always wins. He has, however, been ?generous with ?me," Buffett wrote in a letter to shareholders.His son, Howard, will become Berkshire Hathaway's new chairman. Howard Buffett has served as a Berkshire Hathaway board member since 1993. Warren Buffett will remain a director. He has served as Berkshire Hathaway's chairman since 1970.Buffett stepped down as CEO of the company late last year. He was succeeded by Greg Abel."As Chairman ?Emeritus, Mr. Buffett will remain a member of the Board of ?Directors and will continue to offer his valued judgment and perspective," Berkshire said in a statement.

At 96 he has given up the Berkshire Hathaway chairmanship he held for more than half a century, becoming chairman emeritus. He stays on the board. His son Howard takes the chair, and Greg Abel keeps running the company.Warren Buffett, smiling, walks through the exhibit hall at a Berkshire Hathaway annual shareholder meeting.Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett walks through the exhibit hall as shareholders gather to hear from the billionaire investor at Berkshire Hathaway Inc's annual shareholder meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S., May 4, 2019."Father Time always wins. He has, however, been generous with me. He has given me the opportunity to see Berkshire reach a point where I am more confident than ever about what lies ahead."Warren Buffett, in his letter to shareholders on FridayClose to double the index, sustained for sixty years. It is the number that made him the most closely studied investor alive, and the reason chief executives across corporate America have used him as a sounding board on acquisitions, succession and market panics.Berkshire stock is up about 1% in 2026 while the S&P 500 has risen more than 11%. Rising oil prices and investor appetite for faster-growing companies explain part of it; the rest is shareholders waiting to see whether Abel can deploy capital as his predecessor did.Berkshire sat on $365.5 billion in cash. It has begun spending: billions into stocks including Alphabet, and buybacks stepped up to $4.5 billion in the second quarter. Quarterly operating profit rose 16% to $12.98 billion, ahead of forecasts.Berkshire Hathaway was a failing textile manufacturer when Buffett took control in 1965. What he leaves is a roughly $1.03 trillion conglomerate, run from Omaha, Nebraska, on a philosophy of long-term holding, disciplined capital allocation and plain speaking.

Howard Buffett, a director since 1993 and chairman of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, takes the chairmanship under a long-standing succession plan. Susan Decker continues as lead independent director. Warren Buffett remains on the board.That is what $365.5 billion in cash and a share price up 1% in a year of an 11% market are really asking. Abel has started answering — billions into stocks including Alphabet, buybacks stepped up to $4.5 billion in the quarter — but the record he is measured against is 19.7% a year for sixty years.Abel runs the company. Howard Buffett guards the culture — as Abel put it, the values his father championed will stay at the heart of Berkshire and Howard will be their guardian. Warren Buffett keeps a board seat and, in Berkshire's words, will go on offering his judgment and perspective.Warren Buffett keeps a seat on the board as chairman emeritus. Berkshire says he will go on offering his judgment and perspective. Susan Decker continues as lead independent director, the governance counterweight to a founder's son holding the chair.Sources: Reuters; Associated Press; CNBC; Berkshire Hathaway's statement and Warren Buffett's letter to shareholders, September 18, 2026.

Buffett transformed the company from a struggling textile business into an investment giant ?worth more ?than $1 trillion.

Buffett delivered steady gainsKnown for his long-term strategy and focus on ?buying high-quality ?businesses at reasonable prices, ?Buffett delivered steady gains that outpaced ?broader markets, making him a trusted steward of capital.Buffett ?built Berkshire into an approximately $1.03 trillion conglomerate ?with dozens of businesses, including GEICO car insurance, the BNSF railroad, Berkshire Hathaway Energy, Dairy Queen ice cream, Fruit of ?the Loom underwear and Squishmallows plush toys."The culture Warren built and the values he championed will remain at the heart of Berkshire, and Howard will be their guardian," Abel said in a statement on Friday.

How Buffett shaped generationsBuffett's influence has extended far beyond Berkshire, shaping generations of corporate leaders and investors with his emphasis on long-term thinking, disciplined capital allocation and ?straightforward management.CEOs across Corporate ?America have looked to him as a sounding board on everything from acquisitions and succession to navigating periods ?of market ?turmoil, while his annual shareholder meetings became a gathering point ?for investors seeking insight into the broader business ?landscape.Buffett first announced plans to step away from the conglomerate in May 2025, surprising shareholders and analysts despite his age. After ?decades at the helm, ?he had ?become synonymous with ?the company, making his succession one of the most closely watched in corporate America.In August, Berkshire said ?it began reducing its enormous stockpile of cash in ?the second quarter, investing billions of dollars in stocks such as Alphabet and repurchasing billions of its own, as it reported higher-than-expected profit.Its quarterly operating

US drone firm Powerus signs Pakistan Army MoU amid warming US ties



US drone maker Powerus has signed a deal with the Pakistan Army and landed its first order, just weeks before it merges with a company backed by Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump.Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army chief General Asim Munir with US President Donald Trump at the White House.

US drone company Powerus has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Pakistan Army, and has already secured its first order under the arrangement, the firm's co-founder Brett Velicovich has confirmed. Speaking to Reuters, Velicovich said the deal falls under the category of unmanned aerial systems, though he declined to give further details or reveal the value of the order, citing security sensitivities and confidentiality. Neither the signing of the MoU nor the initial order had been reported before now.The agreement comes as ties between Washington and Islamabad have improved after years of strained relations. It also comes weeks before Powerus is due to merge with US-listed Aureus Greenway Holdings, in which President Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr. and Eric Trump, hold a stake through the investment fund American Ventures.

What did Powerus agree with Pakistan?

Brett Velicovich, co-founder of Powerus, told Reuters on Wednesday that the company had signed a MoU with the Pakistan Army. He said the deal covers unmanned aerial systems, but did not share further details or the value of the order, citing security and confidentiality reasons. The agreement and the order have not been made public before now.Powerus builds drones for both air and sea use, meant for military and industrial work.

How is the deal linked to Trump's family?

Powerus is planning to merge with Aureus Greenway Holdings, a company listed on the stock market and backed by two of President Donald Trump's sons, Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump. Both firms expect the merger to be completed in early October.Will Islamabad talks on West Asia conflict cement Pakistan's role as a credible interlocutor?US President Donald Trump with Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White House. (Image source: White House)US regulatory records show the brothers hold a stake in Aureus through a fund called American Ventures. Once the merger is done, that fund is expected to own close to a tenth of the new combined company.

What did the company say about a conflict of interest?

Andrew Fox, the founder and chief executive of Powerus, rejected any suggestion that the firm's growth was connected to the Trump family's involvement. He said contracts were won on merit, and that the Trump sons play no part in running the business.A spokesperson for Donald Trump Jr said he is only a passive investor with an indirect stake, adding that he had no role in managing the company or in winning contracts anywhere in the world, and no knowledge of this deal before it was made. Eric Trump could not be reached for comment.The White House also weighed in, with Deputy Press Secretary Anna Kelly saying there is no conflict of interest.

What did Pakistan's military say?

Pakistan's army said a Powerus team, led by Velicovich, met army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir this week. The two sides discussed buying defence equipment, building it locally, and long-term plans to grow Pakistan's own defence industry. The army's statement did not mention the MoU directly.The agreement comes at a time when ties between Washington and Islamabad are warming after a rocky few years. Trump has spoken positively about General Munir, while Pakistan has been working on several fronts, economic and defence, to build a closer relationship with the US.Fox said Pakistan's private defence industry is still young and not fully developed, which he believes gives American firms a chance to move in quickly. Velicovich added that the aim is a two-way technology partnership, combining US and Pakistani strengths, and that Powerus is also looking at building some of its technology inside Pakistan.

Africa's urban waste crisis outpacing infrastructure investment, choking neighbourhoods



Johannesburg: Two men sit on top of a hill at the end of a narrow road in Johannesburg's industrial suburb of Kya Sands. But the hill is no natural feature — it is a mountain of illegally dumped trash, piled so high it now swallows the road beyond."When I started as a ward councilor in 2021, this mountain was very small. I could even drive my vehicle down this road," municipal councilor Devon Steenkamp told The Associated Press. "It's now quite a high, big mountain; there are always constant fumes."

The mound is only the edge of a dumpsite that mushroomed after the municipal landfill reached capacity and closed in 2010. Adjacent to it, waves of waste spread across a valley as smoke rises and trucks unload more trash.Johannesburg's mounting waste problem reflects a broader challenge across Africa. Rapidly growing cities, including Lagos, Dakar, and Accra, are generating waste far faster than many municipalities can collect, recycle, or safely dispose of it.

Africa's urban population is projected to double by 2050 to 1.4 billion people, according to a joint report last year by the OECD, African Development Bank, Cities Alliance and United Cities and Local Governments of Africa.The United Nations Environment Program estimates that more than 90 per cent of waste generated in Africa is disposed of at uncontrolled dumpsites and landfills, often with associated open burning. The World Bank projects that waste generation in sub-Saharan Africa will increase by 124 per cent between now and 2050 — the fastest growth of any region.Over 2,000 illegal dumping hot spots

In Johannesburg's densely populated Alexandra township, goats forage through piles of household waste as residents navigate sidewalks strewn with plastic, food scraps, and construction debris.Local resident Linda Makole, 75, is especially concerned about children, many of whom live in one-room homes and rely on sidewalks and a few parks for space to play."Small children can't possibly be healthy living in this environment," Makole told the AP. "Weekly, my landlord takes all his tenants' garbage in a van and goes to dispose of it," she said. "I don't know where he dumps it."Pikitup, the city's waste company, has identified more than 2,000 illegal dumping hot spots and allocated 115 million rand (USD 6.4 million) in 2025/26 to tackle the problem.Some residents said their garbage went uncollected for up to four weeks. The Johannesburg Crisis Alliance has blamed the disruptions on labour disputes, financial constraints, and an aging fleet.Unreliable waste collection has driven demand for informal waste haulers."If the municipality is not collecting the general waste, then of course people are going to phone anybody with a truck to come and collect," said Carmen Jordaan, who co-runs Whole Earth Recycling.Jordaan said that legal disposal required registration and landfill fees, prompting some informal haulers to dump waste illegally in areas like Kya Sands.Polluting the air, soil, and water

Bryce McCall, a former South African equestrian show jumper, has watched a separate dumpsite sprawl alongside his home, where he runs a stables and beekeeping business."I used to have 70 horses here; now we've got 28," McCall said. "Clients don't want to come here anymore."Illegal dump sites also burn trash to make room for more, polluting the air, soil, and water and exposing nearby communities to toxic substances, Jordaan warned. "You're burning toxic plastics, and we're all inhaling that," she said.

"At night, the air is so toxic you can't breathe. We've got air purifiers in our bedroom," McCall said. "The air quality is so bad (bees) don't produce as they should."Dr. Suzan Oelofse, a principal scientist at South Africa's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said that poorly managed waste also attracts vermin and can clog stormwater drains, increasing the risk of flooding.'It's really, really close to tipping point'"The waste generation rate has consistently outpaced investment in new waste management infrastructure," Oelofse said, adding that the city remains heavily dependent on aging landfill sites while recycling and composting lack momentum.South Africa's draft National Waste Management Strategy warns that landfill space is depleting at an "unsustainable rate." The pressure is already evident in Johannesburg, where only two of the city's four municipal landfills still accept general waste.Oelofse said a recent CSIR study found that on average, Johannesburg's landfills have less than a year of disposal capacity remaining."If we've got years, we're lucky," Jordaan said. "It's really, really close to that tipping point."Simply building more landfills is difficult because suitable land is scarce and environmental regulations are stringent.

Oelofse estimates that as much as 80 per cent of Johannesburg's waste could be diverted through recycling and organic waste treatment if households and businesses separated waste at the source.Pikitup is also pushing separation at the source to preserve dwindling landfill space, with plans to expand recycling infrastructure and collaborate with waste reclaimers.Recycler and law student Nomvula Phaliso, 35, said waste pickers are already helping keep recyclable material out of landfills but need greater support, including safe access to bins, community buy-back centres, protective equipment and storage.

Wildfire traps firefighters, volunteers in Indonesia's Mount Bromo national park, killing 4



Jakarta: Four people died and two others suffered severe burns while battling a wildfire in a national park on Indonesia's main island of Java, after they became trapped by thick smoke and rapidly spreading flames, officials said Friday.The blaze erupted in recent days in the Mentigen and Pusung Lingker areas of the popular Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park in East Java's Probolinggo regency.The victims were among a 12-member firefighting team consisting of national park personnel, members of a community fire brigade and local volunteers trying to contain the wildfire on Thursday, said East Java police spokesperson Jules Abraham Abast.Strong winds fanned the flames and caused the fire to spread quickly through dry vegetation. At about 1:30 pm, firefighters operating outside the danger zone received an emergency call from colleagues who had become trapped by dense smoke and advancing flames, Abast said.The fire follows a major blaze in August that scorched nearly 9 square kilometres of grassland and vegetation, including protected edelweiss flowers, in the park.

Rescuers later found three people dead and three others suffering severe burns at an evacuation point. One of those suffering burns died while receiving treatment, Abast said.Two volunteers remained hospitalised with serious burn injuries after being transferred to Dr. Soetomo General Hospital in Surabaya for specialised treatment. Six others escaped unharmed."The incident occurred in a remote mountainous area, complicating rescue efforts," said Probolinggo police chief Asmida Rizki Siregar, who joined emergency crews carrying victims on stretchers for about 2 kilometres because steep terrain prevented vehicles from reaching the siteShe said authorities completed the evacuation late Thursday and have launched an investigation into the deaths, including whether negligence or criminal wrongdoing contributed to the tragedy. Investigators were collecting evidence and interviewing survivors.The deaths came as Indonesia intensified efforts to combat forest and land fires that have worsened this year as El Nino intensifies a prolonged dry season. Contributing factors also include land clearance using fire in the Indonesian part of Borneo and regions of Sumatra Island, as well as water shortages that have hampered Indonesian firefighters, who have received assistance from Japan.Indonesia's Forestry Ministry recorded 799 hotspots nationwide as of Thursday evening, up sharply from 372 a day earlier. More than three-quarters were concentrated in six fire-prone provinces on Sumatra and Borneo.Toxic haze and smoke have caused a health crisis in neighbouring countries as well. The smoke has drifted as far as the Philippines, more than 800 kilometres away.The surge in fires has renewed concerns about transboundary haze across Southeast Asia. Malaysia on Friday ordered hundreds of schools closed in several states because of deteriorating air quality.Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan rejected calls from some lawmakers to seek compensation from Indonesia, saying the crisis should be addressed through diplomatic engagement and ASEAN mechanisms. He said Malaysia was coordinating assistance for Indonesia and would push for stronger regional cooperation on haze management.Singapore also called for closer cooperation. Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said authorities were investigating companies allegedly linked to Indonesian forest and peatland fires that have worsened the haze and would pursue action under Singapore's Transboundary Haze Pollution Act where warranted.Indonesia's Forestry Ministry recorded more than 2,020 square kilometres of burned land between January and July, almost three times Singapore's size. The independent Nusantara Atlas project, which monitors fires using satellite imagery, estimated that nearly 8,960 square kilometres of land had burned by the end of August in Indonesia.

India, Russia begin harbour phase of joint naval exercise INDRA 2026

Moscow: India-Russia naval exercise INDRA 2026 commenced its harbour phase with a planning conference between the operational teams of Indian Naval Ship (INS) Sahyadri and Russian Navy ship Aldar Tsydenzhapov.

According to the Indian Navy, senior naval personnel from the Russian Navyâ•™s Pacific Fleet participated in the conference, which outlined the broad programme for the sea phase of the exercise. In a post on X on Friday, the Indian Navy said, "The Harbour Phase of INDRA 2026 commenced with a Planning Conference between the ops teams of INS Sahyadri and Russian Navy Ship Aldar Tsydenzhapov, with participation from senior naval personnel from the RuFN Pacific Fleet. The conference outlined the broad programme for the Sea Phase of the exercise."• As part of the port call, the delegation aboard INS Sahyadri also held a protocol meeting with Vice Admiral AY Sysuev, Commander of the Primorsky Flotilla of the Pacific Fleet's mixed forces.Earlier, on Wednesday, the Russian Defence Ministry announced the commencement of the joint Russian-Indian cross-branch exercise INDRA 2026 in Russia's Chelyabinsk Region and the Russian Far East. "The joint Russian-Indian cross-branch exercise INDRA 2026 has begun in the Chelyabinsk Region and the Far East.

Foreigners in Nepal may soon travel without carrying physical passports

Kathmandu: Nepal's Department of Immigration is preparing to introduce a system that will enable foreigners to travel across the Himalayan country without carrying their physical passports.The system, which the department has called a "Passport-Free Travel" arrangement, aims to make the stay of foreign nationals in Nepal more convenient, the department said.To use the facility, foreign nationals, once they arrive in Nepal, will be required to install the official app of the Department of Immigration on their mobile devices and fill in the necessary information, including a scanned copy of their passport and visa details.

"Then they can freely travel across the country without carrying their physical passports," said Ram Chandra Tiwari, director general of the department.The department said the app is available on both Android and Apple iOS platforms. Once they register their details on the app, foreign nationals will not be required to produce their physical passports while boarding domestic flights, exchanging currencies at money exchange counters, checking into hotels, or making travel arrangements through trekking agencies."For example, they may forget their passport at a hotel while travelling and be unable to produce it when required," he said.

India warns nationals against seeking jobs in Malaysia using visa-free entry

New Delhi: The High Commission of India in Kuala Lumpur has issued an advisory cautioning Indian nationals against misusing Malaysia's 30-day visa-free entry facility to travel to the country in search of employment, warning that such attempts could lead to overstay, illegal immigration status, exploitation, detention and legal action.In its advisory issued on Tuesday, the High Commission said there had been "a noticeable increase in Indian nationals arriving in Malaysia using the 30-day visa-free facility, to seek employment."It urged Indians travelling to Malaysia on tourist entry to strictly comply with the conditions of their stay and "alerts Indian nationals travelling to Malaysia on tourist visas against taking up employment." The mission also warned travellers about unscrupulous agents offering fraudulent employment opportunities.

According to the advisory, "Many Indian nationals are misled by unscrupulous agents with false job promises, leading to overstay, illegal status, exploitation, detention and legal action."The High Commission stressed that seeking employment through the visa-free facility violates Malaysian immigration rules. It clarified that the facility, which allows Indian passport holders to stay in Malaysia for up to 30 days, is intended "for tourism and social visits only."Indian nationals travelling to Malaysia for tourism have also been advised to carry valid and verifiable travel documents to avoid immigration-related problems upon arrival. These include a confirmed return ticket, hotel booking, and proof of online submission of the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC) three days before the date of arrival. Travellers have further been advised to ensure that their passports have a minimum validity of six months.



Reiterating its warning, the High Commission said, "Once again, Indian nationals are strictly advised not to travel to Malaysia for work / employment purpose without work permit or visa with reference (VDR)."The advisory comes amid concerns over Indian nationals being lured by false job offers and subsequently finding themselves in violation of Malaysian immigration regulations.

World leaders to meet at UN amid wars, global crises

United Nations: This week 140 world leaders and representatives of another 53 countries will be meeting here this week under the shadow of intractable wars and conflicts for the annual high-level meeting.When the meeting starts on Tuesday with the traditional first national address by Brazil's President Lula da Silva, followed by US President Donald Trump, the Gulf Conflict, the Ukraine War, the Gaza situation, and the Sudan civil war of genocidal proportions will hang heavy over the General Assembly chamber.

The perils of a runaway artificial intelligence will be added this year to the climate crisis, terrorism, and global hunger and poverty as top areas of concern. The high falutin speeches in the General Assembly chamber, threaded with boasts and recriminations, but also genuine insights into global problems, may be the face of the high-level meeting, but the real action is in the meetings in missions, hotels and temporary cubicles erected in the UN hallways. And even in informal encounters in the halls of the UN.Cynics will say nothing substantial to find solutions to the crises will emerge from the lectures, but results can emerge from these meetings on the sidelines of the official high-level meeting.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, speaking to reporters, said about the utility of the high-level week, "I think we must take profit of this week to allow for a large number of meetings between those leaders that are relevant in the context of the crisis that we are facing". "I would remind you that last year, there was a very important meeting of the United States with a number of Muslim countries that led to the peace plan for Gaza", he said.Even Trump, a constant critic of the UN, agreed with him on this point about the session's utility, telling reporters that the formation of the Board of Peace for Gaza



flowed from that meeting last year.Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, who was elected General Assembly president for the current session, will preside over the meeting from the high rostrum, above the speaker's lectern."Restoring trust, managing transformation: A UN that delivers for all", is the theme this year. As presidents, kings, prime ministers and ministers take their turn at the dark marble lectern with a gold UN insignia, three major leaders will not be there: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Presidents Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir Putin of Russia.External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will deliver India's address to the General Assembly on Saturday.Xi's absence from the UN this week will be striking because he will be coming to the US to meet Trump in Washington on Thursday. But a notable presence will be Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, who will be speaking a day after Trump of the US, his nation's adversary in the conflict now in its seventh month.Ukraine's President Volodymyr, whose country is now facing the fifth year of Russia's invasion, will be there. While Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be taking the podium on Thursday to justify his country's widely condemned

telanganatoday.comIndia's demand for Russian oil driven by supply shocks, not discounts: Report

New Delhi: India's increased Russian crude imports are being driven by West Asia supply disruptions rather than discounts, with imports averaging 60 million barrels per month, since the start of the US-Iran war, compared to 46 million barrels a month during FY23-26, a report showed on Tuesday.Since the start of the US-Iran war, India has imported 298 million barrels of Russian crude, according to the Axis Bank Economic Research report.

While Russia's share in India's imported crude basket jumped from 0 per cent to 30 per cent between March 2022 to ne 2023, likely due to discounts, the additional 1 million barrel per day since March 2026 "can't be explained by price dynamics alone". "First, the average discount on Russian crude vs. West Asia has been stable at $3-5/bbl since 2023.Second, Russia's share of Indian crude imports rose despite premiums of up to $7/bbl. If India were to procure these excess 60-80 mn barrels in the spot market, oil prices would likely be higher than today," the report argued.Recent experience shows that the threat of very high tariffs is more useful as leverage in trade negotiations than tariffs themselves, and higher oil prices have a more direct passthrough on US retail inflation, said the report.

Republicans are already on the back foot in the mid-



terms due to elevated energy prices."Congressional backing makes this tariff threat legally durable, while pending outcomes of Section 301 on excess capacity could raise tariff volatility. For India, a useful anchor is the 18 per cent headline rate agreed before the US Supreme court invalidated tariffs under the IEEPA authority in February 2026," the report mentioned.When applied, the effective rate also tends to be lower than the headline rate due to exemptions. India's exports this fiscal (to date) have grown 19 per cent year-on-year, led by electronics, auto/parts, metals and refined petroleum products, while exports to the US have also recovered.

US to open two new military bases in Greenland, sources say

COPENHAGEN/WASHINGTON, - The US plans to re-establish a Cold War-era military base in southern Greenland and set up ?another on the east coast, now used by the Danish dog sled patrol, under ?a deal to be signed with Denmark and Greenland on Tuesday, according to three people familiar with the matter.The sites are Narsarsuaq, whose population has dwindled to a few dozen people since the US closed its Bluie ?West One military base in the 1950s, and Mestersvig, a military outpost used by ?the Sirius Dog Sled Patrol, a Danish special forces unit, said two of ?the people.Get a look at the day ahead in European and global markets with the Morning Bid Europe newsletter. Sign up here.

Denmark, Greenland and the United States are expected to sign their new agreement at the ?United Nations General Assembly in New York City at 10:30 a.m. ET (1430 GMT) on Tuesday.The text ?of the agreement has not been made public and the three people familiar with the deal, speaking on condition of anonymity, said its details will not be finalized until it is signed.The governments of Denmark and Greenland did ?not immediately respond to a request by Reuters for comment.Item 1 of 2 General view of Mestersvig military outpost in Mestersvig, Greenland, September 18, 2025. REUTERS/Guglielmo Mangiapane/File Photo[1/2]General view of Mestersvig military outpost in Mestersvig, Greenland, September 18, 2025. REUTERS/Guglielmo Mangiapane/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tabA White House spokesperson declined to comment ?on the details of the agreement, repeating an earlier statement that its signing on Tuesday would "secure and defend ?the security ?of Greenland and the United States."Denmark says the agreement puts Arctic security under the watch of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the military defense alliance, rather than leaving it solely to the US and Denmark.The deal follows months of pressure from US President Donald Trump, who has long said he ?wants the US to ?control Greenland and has ?at times refused to rule out military or economic force to acquire the semi-autonomous Danish territory. The idea has been rejected by an overwhelming ?majority of Greenlanders, polling shows.Trump's threats, which peaked in January, triggered a ?diplomatic crisis ?within NATO and pushed Denmark and Greenland into negotiations with Washington aimed at defusing the pressure.During the Cold War, the US maintained 17 military installations and more than 10,000 personnel in Greenland. Today only Pituffik ?Space ?Base remains,



with some 150 US military personnel.Reporting by Stine ?Jacobsen in Copenhagen and Gram Slattery and Erin Banco in Washington; Additional reporting by Jacob Gronholt-Pedersen in Copenhagen, and Phil ?Stewart and Steve Holland in Washington; Writing by Jonathan Allen; Editing by Don Durfee and Nia WilliamsOur Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tabStine Jacobsen is a Senior Correspondent at Reuters, where she has worked for more than a decade. Currently based in Copenhagen, she reports on politics and business across the Nordic and Baltic regions. Coverage spans major Danish companies including Novo Nordisk, Orsted, Vestas, Maersk and Lego, as well as Arctic affairs and regional security. She serves on the board of the International Press Centre in Copenhagen.

Erin Banco is a national security correspondent focusing on the intelligence community. She covers everything from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to U.S. covert operations overseas. She previously worked at POLITICO as a national security reporter. Banco has a long history covering the Middle East region, from Cairo to Baghdad to Aleppo where she's reported on the Arab Spring and its aftermath, including the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS. Her 2017 book, Pipe Dreams, focuses on the development of the oil and gas industry in the northern Kurdistan region of Iraq. Banco attended The University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she majored in Arabic and journalism. She earned a master's in public administration from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs in 2014.Gram Slattery is a White House correspondent in Washington, focusing on national security, intelligence and foreign affairs. His work covers how key U.S. foreign policy decisions are debated, shaped and executed. He was previously a national political correspondent, covering the 2024 presidential campaign

Trump praises Mamdani after rare visit to New York mayor's residence

New York: Donald Trump made an unusual visit for a sitting president to the official residence of the city's mayor for a meeting with Zohran Mamdani.

The visit, marked by bonhomie, came as a surprise on Monday because Mamdani is a Democratic Socialist, while Trump has made attacks on socialists a running theme of his campaign for Republican candidates in the midterm elections.It was Trump's first appointment in the city after he arrived there for the United Nations high-level week.After their meeting, Trump praised Mamdani, saying he was "off to a good start" and was "going to be a great" mayor.

The populists from the two ends of the political spectrum appear to have hit it off despite their ideological differences and their belligerent bases, and this was the first time in 44 years a president has visited the city's mayor at his residence.They appeared to have bonded over their interest in building structures.Mamdani has proposed a massive housing complex with 12,000 housing units built on top of a rail yard."What we're talking about is something very rare in our city; it's the possibility of constructing an entirely new neighbourhood," Mamdani said at their news conference.He said it would require federal assistance.Recognising the nationwide housing shortage, Trump has proposed plans to ameliorate it.Mamdani said that he aired his opposition to Trump's policies, including the immigration crackdown and the withdrawal of temporary immigration status given to people from countries in turmoil like Haiti."I shared my very strong opinions about how we can keep New Yorkers safe, how we can keep immigrant New Yorkers safe", Mamdani said.Trump said Mamdani felt "very strongly" about the issue.Despite their differences, Trump, a native New Yorker, said he had seen "numerous different mayors ... some great ones and some not so great



ones"."I'll be able to say you're going to be a great one, and you're off to a start", he said.A reporter asked Mamdani about Trump banning reporters from CNN and MS Now networks, and Politico news outlet.He said, "I told the president that we're going to have all of the members of the press here on the lawn and that is something that I believe in."Pointing to the presence of the media, Trump said, "It's interesting 'cause they said they were gonna boycott me, but they never boycott me. So, I wasn't very worried about that. Look at all that press".He accused the media of propagating "fake news" and said he had an "obligation" to keep them out.Mamdani and Trump had earlier met in February at the White House, which was also marked by surprising friendliness.According to Politico, true to his socialist roots, Mamdani was scheduled to meet Bernie Sanders, the leftist senator and vehement critic of Trump, who has been like a mentor to him.The mayor's 15-room residence set on 4.5 hectares along the

Worsening El Nino threatens Asia with drought, potentially raising food prices globally

Banten: All signs are pointing toward a record-breaking El Nino this year, which experts say may cause severe drought in Asia and other extreme weather across the world, threatening food security for millions of people.El Nino is part of a natural climate cycle of warming ocean temperatures, but this year's is expected to reach new extremes of drought, heat waves, flooding and other climate-related disruptions in South America, Africa and Asia.Southeast Asia is one of the world's most climate vulnerable regions. It's already beset by an energy crisis triggered by the war in Iran. El Nino is already fueling wildfires across farmland, depleting water supplies for major cities and hurting fish catches in the region.Asian governments that have been drawing on their financial reserves to mitigate the war's ripple effects of higher energy costs and scarce fertilizer supplies have less capacity to cope with this year's intensifying El Nino, which is forecast to peak in December.The phenomenon may amplify other crises in Southeast Asia, according to Paul Teng, with Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, who said, "El Nino is only compounding all the other problems that we see."Extreme El Nino may threaten global food securityDuring El Nino years, sea surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean are warmer than usual. This happens every few years and often alters global weather patterns.This year, the seas already are hotter than average, with global oceans hitting new temperature records in August as the climate warms, said Kareff Rafisura, chief of the Disaster Risk Reduction Division at the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.This intensifying El Nino may be the "strongest in living memory," according to the United Kingdom's national weather and climate service.



keeping began in 1950.El Nino's impact will be felt differently across regions, but it is expected to jeopardize food security worldwide. It could push at least 49 million more people into acute food insecurity by the end of 2027, according to the United Nations' World Food Program.The problem will be worst in parts of Central America and southern Africa, with significant effects also anticipated in eastern Africa and South and Southeast Asia, warned the food agency.El Nino is already hitting parts of AsiaIn Southeast Asia, wildfires are torching forests and peatlands in Indonesia, sending up plumes of toxic haze. The water level of a major reservoir supplying the bustling capital city of Jakarta – the world's biggest metropolis – is dropping inch by inch.As the lake dries, the ruins of one of 11 villages that had been inundated by the reservoir have emerged, as alarm grows over the need for alternative water supplies for the city of 42 million

Heavy rain, strong winds batter Japan as typhoon nears eastern coast

Tokyo: Japan's weather agency warned of heavy rain, strong winds, flooding and landslides as a large and powerful typhoon moves toward the country's eastern Pacific coast on Monday.

As of 10 am local time, Typhoon Dujuan, located about 100 km west-southwest of Hachijo Island in the Izu Island chain near Tokyo, was moving north at a speed of 25 km per hour (kph). It had a central atmospheric pressure of 960 hectopascals, packing maximum gusts of 198 kph, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA).The year's 25th typhoon is expected to pass near the Boso Peninsula in Chiba Prefecture, east of Tokyo, from the evening to late on Monday.

On Monday morning, heavy downpours have already battered the Kanto-Koshin region in eastern Japan as well as the Tokai region in central Japan, reports Xinhua news agency. There have been reports of road inundation in multiple cities in Chiba, and the JMA has also issued a level 4 landslide alert for parts of the prefecture.The weather agency forecast up to 350 mm of



rain in the Tokai region, 300 mm in the Kanto region and the Izu Island chain, and 200 mm in the Tohoku region in northeastern Japan in the 24 hours through 6 a.m. on Tuesday.The typhoon's approach coincides with a five-day holiday period in Japan. Residents have been urged to check the latest weather information and take precautions, including considering rescheduling their plans during extreme weather.

Will the state be India's next big travel destination?



I grew up in Guwahati in the 1990s, a time when Assam rarely made it to national conversations, let alone global news. It was often defined by insurgency, bandhs, and a sense of isolation — both geographical and cultural. Yet, life carried on in its own unhurried rhythm. Rainy mornings smelled of petrichor, afternoons were reserved for siestas and freshly brewed lal cha, and summer evenings unfolded by the Brahmaputra's banks. Bihu and Durga Puja brought the city alive, momentarily dissolving the troubles of the time. But for those beyond its borders, the state remained a distant, unfamiliar land — reduced to tea gardens, dense forests, and one-horned rhinoceros. The idea of it as a thriving tourism hub felt improbable.

Cut to 2025, and Assam is making headlines for all the right reasons. There was the recent UNESCO addition of Charaideo Moidams — the 700-year-old mound burial system of the Ahom dynasty, often called the 'Pyramids of India' — to its World Heritage List. It has brought the medieval kingdom's legacy into the global spotlight, leading to the announcement of a new Charaideo Museum. The state, which banks heavily on its wildlife destinations to attract tourists, has also declared Sikhna Jwhwlao, a vital corridor between Manas and Raimona National Parks, as its eighth national park, further cementing its reputation as a biodiversity hotspot. The fact that Assam was ranked No. 4 on The New York Times' '52 Places to Go in 2025' list — for its "incomparable biodiversity", "tea estates and river islands", and its deep-rooted history and indigenous cultures — has also added to the buzz.And the developments don't end there. Luxury tourism is on the rise with The Postcard Hotel's debut in the Durrung Tea Estate and Reliance's partnership announcement with the Oberoi Group to build a seven-star hotel. Is Assam finally on the brink of a long-awaited tourism breakthrough?

Tourist arrivals in Assam have surged dramatically over the past five years, signalling a shift in the state's travel landscape. Domestic footfall, which had plummeted to just 13.5 lakh in 2020-21 due to the pandemic, rebounded sharply to 98.12 lakh in 2022-23 before settling at 70.36 lakh in 2023-24. International arrivals tell a similar story — rising from a mere 347 in 2020-21 to a high of 26,128 last year, according to Assam Tourism. Come summer, when temperatures climb to a toasty 32 degrees Celsius, the state government hopes the numbers will increase even more.

In aid of this, last month, at the Advantage Assam 2.0 Summit held in Guwahati, the state secured ?4.91 lakh crore in investments, with 270 MoUs signed, focusing on tourism, culture, and hospitality. At a time when overtourism in popular destinations such as Goa and India's many hill stations — and its attendant troubles of environmental degradation, rising real estate costs, and overstretched infrastructure — are driving tourists to seek less congested options, Assam hopes to step up as a tranquil alternative."Earlier, people only knew about Kaziranga [home to the endangered rhino] and, to a lesser extent, Manas. Now, with Instagram and content creators, even community festivals that were once local events are getting national attention," says Amit Kumar, executive editor of EastMojo, one of the Northeast's leading digital multimedia news platforms. He points to hidden gems such as Goalpara's Jain Caves and Kaipholangso Waterfall in Karbi Anglong, now weekend destinations thanks to social media creators seeking fresh, high-engagement content. "With insurgency at an all-time low [according to Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah this week, "violent incidents in the state decreased by 70%"], previously inaccessible regions are now welcoming more visitors," he adds.The state is also further strengthening its appeal. There are the 'Awesome Assam' campaigns in other Indian states, proactive tourism initiatives, better road and digital connectivity, and the introduction of a tourist police force to ensure visitor safety. The Guwahati airport is undergoing a major expansion, too. Scheduled to open soon, it is increasing its runway capacity and will be able to accommodate 13.1 million passengers annually.Rural tourism is coming up, with homestays in Majuli, Goalpara and Nagaon offering immersive experiences. "I work with women to help them set up homestays — not just as a business but as a way to introduce authentic Assamese culture to travellers," says Arijit Purkayastha of Koyeli Tours and Travels. Tea tourism, once confined to specific seasons, is also expanding, reinforcing Assam's position as a year-round destination.

There's a shift towards experience-driven tourism as well, exemplified by hospitality brands such as The Postcard. Set within the 140-year-old Durrung Tea Estate, this boutique property marks a turning point for high-end hospitality in a region long overlooked by luxury travellers."From the very inception of The Postcard, we recognised the immense potential of India's Northeast. Durrung stood out for its accessibility, deep-rooted tea legacy, and seamless connection to Assam's culture and wildlife," says founder and CEO Kapil Chopra. In 2022, the Assam government allowed tea estates to use 5% of their land for eco-friendly tourism.

"We chose Assam as our first destination in the Northeast for a very strategic reason: India's tea trails begin here. Durrung is also surrounded by five national parks and offers excellent accessibility — just three hours from Guwahati, two from Itanagar, and 15 minutes from Tezpur airport, which is being upgraded," states Chopra, adding that instead of a large-scale

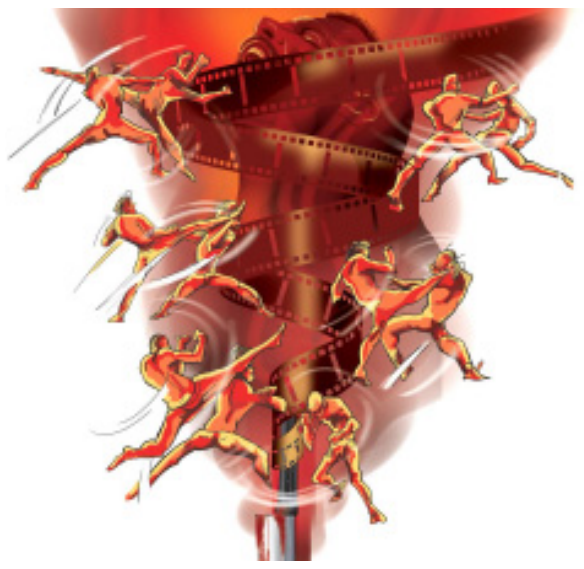
Student violence in Kerala: The many layers behind the mayhem

When he retires as Principal of a government school in Palakkad district this May, A.K. Anilkumar is likely to carry the memory of an incident that happened towards the fag end of his 36-year-long career, though he would prefer to forget it.In January 2025, the video of a 17-year-old Plus One student from his school went viral on social media. Furious over the confiscation of his mobile phone, which was not allowed in the school, the boy could be seen making a death threat at his teachers, including Anilkumar. It created such a furore that it prompted the State government to order a probe."It was the first such experience in my long teaching career. It wasn't the fear of bodily harm that hurt me but the pain of whether all my years in teaching have been rewarded in such a manner," rues Anilkumar.

The incident came close on the heels of another incident in which a man was stabbed to death by two minor boys, aged 14 and 16, for allegedly questioning the public use of drugs at Thekkinkadu Maidan in Thrissur district on the New Year eve.Since then, a spate of violent incidents involving youngsters has struck Kerala, claiming many lives and disrupting several families. A gang war-like clash between two groups of teenage students led to the death of a 15-year-old boy at Thamarassery in Kozhikode. Several instances of group clashes involving school students have gone viral on social media.The violent incidents involving schoolchildren and teenagers have triggered a debate about what has gone wrong with the youth. While some blame it on the drug menace and the alleged influence of violent movies, others have raised deeper concerns that include gaps in parenting, mental health anxieties, and the impact of tech and social media on Gen Z.Arun B. Nair, Professor of Psychiatry, Government Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, feels that the younger generation is facing a social disconnect syndrome, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 lockdowns and the digital revolution."Digital revolution appears to have made humans more impulsive and impatient. The revolution, which facilitates instant fulfilment of a desire, whether going for a movie or expressing love, has also eliminated the previously existent time lapse between a desire and gratification. This leaves the brain hardly any time to evolve an alternative plan if that desire goes unfulfilled, resulting in aggressive overreaction with suicidal or homicidal ramifications," Dr. Nair says.Thampy Mathai, Director of Maithri, the Kochi chapter of Befrienders Worldwide, a global organisation working for suicide prevention, points out that "suicidal tendencies are often found to be triggered by relationships, which, in the first place, are built on fleeting interactions on social media. When those relationships go haywire, they are hell-bent on either self-destruction or the destruction of the other partner," he says.

Aseel Muhammed, a social media influencer and a third-year psychology student at Farook College, Kozhikode, accuses the older generation of setting the narrative over the violent conduct of the new generation and the mainstream media running debates pandering to that."The older generation who runs the system is not willing to admit their follies in parenting and deficiencies in academic curriculum. They are even unwilling for a course correction. They, along with the media, are impatient to wrap up the debate by finding convenient scapegoats such as cinema and solutions like bringing back corporal punishment to straighten up the children. The stressful surroundings in which children are growing, their emotional well-being, and lack of avenues to express themselves are often neglected," he says.Amruth G. Kumar, Professor of Education, School of Education, Central University of Kerala, attributes the child aggression to a large extent to the authoritarian and violent parenting styles, unresolved sibling rivalry, feuds between family members and with neighbours, and lack of parental supervision."Violence can be used as a tool to establish dominance and status in peer groups. Students grab this idea from their surroundings. Violence for dominance is rampant around them and if the family environment also suggests that violence is an effective means for gaining control or respect, children tend to emulate it," he says.Award-winning Malayalam filmmaker Blessy says that a few recent movies in Malayalam, which had an overdose of violence and reaped success at the box office, had tried to normalise killings or murdering. "I feel there is an attempt to celebrate such violence on screen knowingly or unknowingly," he says.Muhsin Parari, a popular scriptwriter, questions the very premise of the debate, which he alleges has put the entire Gen Z under the needle of suspicion.

"Have we carried out any scientific study yet on whether there is a spike in violence among the youth? Isn't it irresponsible to make such inferences without concrete data-based evidence?" he wonders.Coming to the defence of cinema, Parari feels that the grip of a social media giant on public opinion was way more dangerous than cinema's influence on the youth. The public falls for algorithm-driven sensationalism and populism, producing absurd paranoia to evade accountability, he says.



Blessy agrees that the blame of instilling aggression and violence in the minds of the youth cannot be placed on cinema alone, as it figures among several other psychological and social issues prevalent in society. "But cinema is capable of an instant transfer of an emotion to the audience," he says.A few members of the film fraternity, who preferred not to be quoted, share the apprehension that the debate may even lead to backdoor censorship of cinemas, which, according to them, the moralistic elements in society have been craving for long.The first salvo has been fired with the Central Board of Film Certification denying satellite rights to a recent Malayalam flick on the grounds of extreme violence, points out a popular filmmaker, who wished not to be quoted.

P. Vijayan, Additional Director General of Police, Intelligence, who was behind the concepts of social policing and Student Police Cadet programme, feels that attributing the violence amongst youth to a few convenient factors may result in a lopsided conclusion."The general deterioration in mental health, loss of a values-based system, the rising pleasure-seeking attitude, and the environment around the younger generation also play a role in shaping their responses and behaviour," he says."Films and drugs may serve as triggers but portraying them as foundational issues will not help. Working in silos will not help but collective societal efforts are needed. Also, scientific studies on behaviour of the youth are needed," he says.Prof. Kumar has called for the elimination of undemocratic spaces in households and society as the first step towards preventing violence among children, besides a collaborative approach from the family, school, and community."Parents shall provide emotional security and a safe home environment for their children.

Also, schools should learn to decode the cues to understand the problems students face at home and in the community, their fears, and concerns. Rather than having a counsellor in every school, every teacher needs to become a psychologist who understands the child," he says.Dr. Nair finds faulty parenting practices as problematic, especially parents' lack of communication during their children's adolescence. "Adolescents often complain that parents either don't listen to their problems or trivialise them while parents complain of their adolescent children being not obedient. What is needed is not authoritarian parenting, which the previous generations were used to, but authoritative parenting, which is a blend of affection and discipline. Parents need to understand that their children were born in a more rights-based world with greater emphasis on personal rights and space," Dr. Nair says.He also warns that addiction to gadgets and graphically violent online games could serve as a trigger to a generation, which is already subjected to faulty parenting and is impatient and impulsive owing to their over exposure to digital technology.Anilkumar remains worried about the aggressive behaviour of his teenaged student. So are many parents and teachers about the lives of the youth lost to violence on the streets.

A new discovery sheds light on our long-extinct cousins

Hyderabad: Fragments of face bones from a species of extinct human previously unknown, dating from between 1.2 million and 1.4 million years ago, were discovered in the caves in the Atapuerca Mountains in Spain during archaeological excavations, which were going on f the last 50 years.The human traces stretched from the Bronze Age to hundreds of thousands of years into the past – before modern humans like us (Homo sapiens) even existed. These are earliest human remains ever found in Western Europe.Back in 2022, during an annual field season, the team unearthed a series of bone fragments from a cave called Sima del Elefante (Pit of the Elephant).

Is learning Hindi as a third language necessary?

The National Education Policy, 2020, encourages students up to at least Class 5 to learn a regional language in addition to the local language or mother tongue and English. While the Central government asserts that the choice of the additional regional language is left to the States, the NEP's strong pitch for the three-language formula has led to fear, especially in Tamil Nadu, that there is an attempt being made to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking States. This week, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin dubbed the NEP a "Hindutva policy" aimed at promoting Hindi, rather than focusing on India's overall development. Is learning Hindi as a third language necessary? Yogendra Yadav and T.M. Krishna discuss the question in a conversation moderated by K.V. Prasad. Edited excerpts:

Should learning a third language be made compulsory?

Yogendra Yadav: Absolutely not. First, because the spirit of federalism and respect for diversity is foundational to the Union of India. So, nothing can be imposed on any State, least of all a language policy. If we have different views on language, they are resolved through consensus, not through imposition. I'm entirely with the DMK and the people of Tamil Nadu on the imposition issue.T.M. Krishna: If I may ask, why learn three languages? To be clear, we are not talking about students learning other languages of their own accord, which is anyway happening. A government that selectively deletes chapters from history textbooks, stating that there is too much of an education burden on students, is not even willing to look at the fact that learning another language is definitely a burden on them. Also, children in primary and middle school don't have an imagination of time or the distant future. So asking them to learn a third language, in the name of future benefit, is basically an imposition. There is also the argument being made that learning more languages creates unity. This is a smokescreen. Forcing a language on someone is not unity.Yogendra Yadav: Once we disentangle the idea of teaching three languages from Central imposition and the compulsion of Hindi, we can discuss the issue dispassionately. The point about the burden of education is something that experts have handled. They have come to the conclusion that if you teach a third language, it only helps your primary and secondary language, so I believe that the three-language formula merits serious consideration on grounds of pedagogy and national unity. As for practicality, I know of schools which do follow this formula. They do not give you the option of all the 22 languages (recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution), but they give you three or four options to choose from. These things can be worked out provided there is a political will and a capacity to teach anything at all.

If compulsory learning of an additional language will be a burden on students, will it not be equally burdensome on schools, since they will need qualified teachers and funds for this purpose?T.M. Krishna: More than 5,000 schools in Uttar Pradesh are managed by a single teacher. Bihar has a massive teacher shortage. So, even in terms of resources, this formula does not make sense. When resources are few, it makes more sense to look at the ways in which we can teach primary subjects better. And when the mother tongue is the mode of learning and communication in class, and there is English as well, I don't believe that adding another language is necessary.

Is it fair to make adoption of the three-language formula a pre-condition for the release of Central funds for schemes?

Yogendra Yadav: Holding back grants is unconstitutional. This is part of a political assault on the autonomy of the Tamil Nadu government, led by the Governor himself. I understand why not just the DMK, but all parties and the people of Tamil Nadu feel slighted.T.M. Krishna: It is unconstitutional, unethical, and devoid of any basis. Some people say, let the people decide whether they want three languages or two. But people did not decide about the three-language policy; individuals in the Union government made this decision.

Why is there so much resistance to an educational policy that stresses on the need to learn an additional language?

Yogendra Yadav: My suspicion is that the resistance does not come from pedagogical concerns. It emanates from disquiet with double standards. Frankly, the formula was sabotaged by north India. The expectation was that all the southern and eastern States would learn Hindi, while the Hindi speakers found a shortcut for themselves — they used Sanskrit as a shield so that they would not have to learn a new language. So, in effect, the policy meant that everyone would be forced to learn the mother tongue of Hindi speakers, but they would not have to learn anyone else's mother tongue. That legitimate unease has clouded the debate on multilingualism in our country.T.M. Krishna: Multilingualism is not just a political problem; it's pedagogic too. The pedagogical methods have changed. At the primary and middle-school level, activity-based learning and experiential learning should be the focus. There are already two languages at play; that itself is multilingualism. I do not view multilingualism in terms of language alone; it is a way of making people be diverse in feeling and in being. People learn languages when they forge relationships, for instance. We can't forget that cultural character and emotional connections make people learn a language.Monolingualism is predominant in many Hindi-speaking States, irrespective of the three-language formula.Yogendra Yadav: The problem is the false sense of pride that many people in north India have developed, especially in Hindi-speaking areas, that somehow Hindi is a more privileged language than any other language. Many people in the north use the term 'national language', which is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution. This is what irks the non-Hindi speaker. The Hindi that we know today is a recent and young language, unlike Tamil or Kannada, which are some of the oldest and richest languages in the world.



T.M. Krishna: It is difficult to get data on this, but I would like to know how many schools in north India that profess to teach three languages really do that. Is the policy actually being followed?

Yogendra Yadav: As I said, in most north Indian States, Hindi is taught along with English and Sanskrit. Sanskrit has become a way to bypass the requirement of the third language. So, technically, yes, it is followed.T.M. Krishna: Exactly my point. There is a very important cultural point that needs to be understood about the Tamil people and the Tamil language. Tamil as a language is very distinct from every other Sanskrit-based or Sanskrit-derived language. Fundamentally, it is a very difficult task for a Tamil speaker to even learn Hindi or its cousin languages. In Tamil Nadu, people have learned other languages on their own. The dominant positioning of Sanskrit in the NEP, especially for a Tamil speaker, is intimidating especially when the language is so distinct and different grammatically and structurally.Yogendra Yadav: To position Sanskrit as the sole carrier of our cultural heritage is a serious mistake. Besides, Sanskrit is not being taught to inculcate classical learning, but mainly to sabotage the three-language formula. In effect, Hindi speakers are not learning a new language or script.

What do you propose is the way forward to end the current stand-off?

Yogendra Yadav: Learning three languages, which are distinct from each other, is a good idea to nurture multilingualism that is inherent in our cultures. But this cannot be imposed on anyone. Students should learn a modern Indian language that is distinct from their mother tongue. In the north, it would be "preferably a south Indian language" — exactly what the original formula had mandated and was never implemented.T.M. Krishna: The distinctness is exactly why I feel there should be only two languages. English is already so distinct from whatever language you speak, be it Hindi or Tamil. Therefore, adding another language is not going to help.

Nothing to accelerate its 'Make in India' initiatives

New Delhi: Leading consumer electronics brand Nothing said on Friday it will continue to add more workforce in India, as it has always believed in working with the local economy to provide the necessary boost.India will play a pivotal role in the global smartphone industry in the years to come, and Nothing is committed to accelerating its 'Make in India' initiatives and boosting domestic production.Nothing's Co-founder Carl Pei has just announced to hiring of two Chiefs of Staff to run the company in the US and in India. "This is all in line with our larger plan of ensuring India's key status in the scheme of things," said Pranay Rao, Head of Marketing, India, Nothing."We currently have 500 employees in our Chennai factory, of which 95 per cent are women, 800 plus employees in the Noida factory and 80 plus employees on-role across functions.

‘We’re still at the beginning of the AI journey’



Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made remarkable strides in recent years, yet according to machine learning expert Shreyas Subramanian, there is still much to uncover.To understand AI’s evolution and where it’s headed, I connected with Subramanian, a Principal Data Scientist at AWS, on The Interface podcast, to gather his insights on the development of deep neural networks, the rise of transformers, and the broader trajectory of AI.

Tracing the roots of neural networks to the early conceptualisations of artificial neurons, Subramanian explained the work of Frank Rosenblatt in the 1950s with the Perceptron model.“These perceptrons are simple pattern recognition compute units,” he explained. “Surprisingly, they are still used today in dense layers and adapters to make large language models more efficient.”This foundational technology laid the groundwork for neural networks, which aimed to become universal function approximators that could map any input to any output.

The Rise of Neural NetworksInterest in neural networks resurged in the early 2000s, driven by advances in hardware and access to massive datasets. Subramanian highlighted the pivotal role of AlexNet, which popularised deep convolutional neural networks (CNNs) by winning the ImageNet competition. “AlexNet set the baseline by stacking perceptrons, introducing deep convolution neural networks, and leveraging GPU advancements,” he noted.

CNNs transformed image recognition by using convolution operations, akin to sliding a coloured plastic filter over an image to highlight specific features, dramatically improving classification tasks and paving the way for modern AI applications.While CNNs revolutionised image processing, they lacked memory capabilities, which Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) addressed. “The missing component from early CNN literature was the ability to form memory,” Subramanian said. RNNs introduced mechanisms to retain information over time, though they struggled with issues like the vanishing gradient problem.To overcome these limitations, architectures like Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and Gated Recurrent Units (GRUs) enabled specialised memory modules, allowing AI to handle complex temporal dependencies more effectively.

AI development has often drawn inspiration from neuroscience, though Subramanian acknowledged the gap between artificial and biological intelligence. “We still don’t understand enough about the brain to replicate its efficiency,” he admitted. The human brain’s ability to process sensory inputs in parallel, adapt through neuroplasticity, and perform energy-efficient computations remains unmatched.Despite AI models boasting billions of parameters, they still fall short of the brain’s capabilities. “Today’s large language models exceed the number of neurons in the human brain, yet they’re limited in comparison to the brain’s efficiency and flexibility,” Subramanian observed.One milestone in AI’s journey was the development of AlphaGo by DeepMind, which demonstrated the power of reinforcement learning and deep neural networks. “It surpassed human performance in the game of Go, relying on deep learning and reinforcement strategies to handle complex decision-making,” Subramanian reflected. AlphaGo’s success highlighted AI’s potential in strategic reasoning and long-term planning, influencing advancements beyond gaming.

In 2017, AI took a leap forward with the introduction of the Transformer architecture, particularly in natural language processing. The seminal paper, ‘Attention Is All You Need’, introduced self-attention mechanisms that outperformed previous RNN-based models. “Transformers eliminated sequential bottlenecks and handled long sequences efficiently,” Subramanian explained.This architecture led to models like BERT and GPT, which fueled the rise of large language models and generative AI. The adaptability of Transformers made them foundational for diverse applications, from text generation to image and audio processing.

Discussing the competitive landscape, Subramanian noted how OpenAI’s strategic focus on scaling language models gave it an edge over tech giants like Google. “OpenAI invested heavily in compute resources and data curation at a time when others were hesitant,” he said. This early commitment paid off with the success of GPT-2 and GPT-3, leading to widespread adoption and commercial success.Meanwhile, companies like Google and Amazon pursued different strategies, balancing research with business priorities. “Google’s focus was more on moonshot projects, while Amazon emphasised providing diverse AI solutions to customers,” Subramanian observed.AI’s evolution from simple perceptrons to transformative language models reflects decades of innovation, interdisciplinary research, and technological advancements. Yet, as Subramanian emphasised, “We’re still at the beginning of this journey.

Uncertainty, new visa battles for students in the U.S.



“Super afraid” – that’s how Columbia University doctoral student Ranjani Srinivasan feels after self-deporting to Canada. U.S. immigration and customs enforcement agents raided her apartment on the campus housing, claiming she was a “Hamas sympathiser”, and she was forced to take refuge in Canada.Speaking to The Hindu’s Kallol Bhattacherjee in an online interview from an undisclosed location in Canada, Ms. Srinivasan, who is in her fifth year of PhD, said she is “super afraid of retaliation” and that she is not yet aware of what specific charges were brought against her by the American authorities that led to her being “disenrolled” from the university just six months before she was to complete her PhD.Prior to her case, the March 8 arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate who became a leader of pro-Palestinian protests on the campus, drew global attention. According to media reports, the Trump administration sought to deport Mr. Khalil, a legal permanent resident of the United States. On Friday (March 14, 2025), Immigration officials announced the arrest of a second person who participated in Pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University. That the Trump administration has decided to construe any condemnation of Israel’s brutal war on Gaza as support for terrorism has set off panic among students. While the developments are widely seen as emblematic of the regime’s targeted attack on those expressing solidarity with Palestine, universities are faced with many questions. Almost daily, students are confronting new realities about their altered visa statuses, funding cuts, and a rapid reconfiguration of the university system itself. Their visas and academic futures have never looked more precarious.Meanwhile in Gaza, the January 19 ceasefire agreement has hardly brought respite to survivors. At least five Palestinians were killed, including two local journalists, and others wounded on Saturday (March 15, 2025) in an Israeli strike on Gaza’s northern Beit Lahiya town, medics told Reuters. Witnesses and fellow journalists said the people in the car were on a mission for a charity called Al-Khair Foundation in Beit Lahiya, and they were accompanied by journalists and photographers when the strike hit them, the news agency reported, pointing to the “fragility” of the ceasefire.

Our Foreign Affairs Editor Stanly Johny reviewed some recent books on Palestine. Pankaj Mishra’s The World After Gaza; Raja Shehadeh’s What Does Israel Fear from Palestine?; and Antony Loewenstein’s, The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World. “How did Israel, founded by a people who were victimised by Nazism, become an “inhuman victimiser?” How can the liberal “gentile” West not be bothered by the mass violence Israel is committing against the Palestinians? In The World After Gaza, Mishra seeks to understand the shrinking grey zone between the victim and the victimiser,” he writes.

Top 5 stories this week:

1. Terror on the train: The Hindu editorial on Pakistan and its Balochistan province

2. Kallol Bhattacherjee writes on the Baloch Liberation Army, the rebels who shook Pakistan

3. Sri Lanka’s Parliament will debate a nearly three-decade-old report probing allegations of unlawful detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings by the State between 1988 and 1990, the ruling National People’s Power [NPP] government has said.

4. Rare success: The Hindu editorial on the International Criminal Court and Duterte arrest

5. New Delhi is hosting the annual Raisina Dialogue from March 17-19, 2025. Who are the newsmakers attending the 10th edition this year? Will Ukraine war, tariffs threatened by U.S. President Donald Trump, relations with China dominate proceedings? Why are leaders from West Asia and South East Asia not well represented? What about Pakistan? – Our Diplomatic Affairs Editor Suhasini Haidar tells us what to expect from the foreign policy bash.

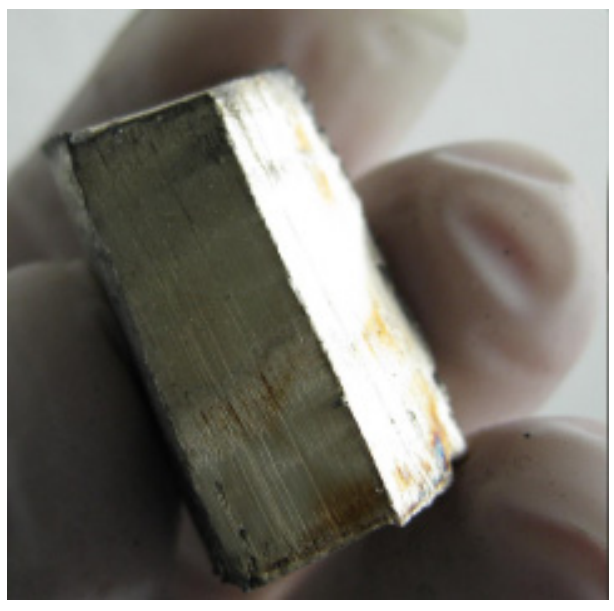
From mines to minds: how lithium shapes energy and psychiatry

Lithium, a silvery-white alkali metal, was discovered in 1817 when Swedish chemist Johan August identified it within the mineral petalite. Photograph used for representational purposes onlyLithium, a silvery-white alkali metal, was discovered in 1817 when Swedish chemist Johan August identified it within the mineral petalite. Photograph used for representational purposes only | Photo Credit: Dnn87, CC BY 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

In a significant stride towards bolstering strategic resources, Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent visit to the United States last month culminated in the launching of a collaborative initiative focused on recovering and processing critical minerals, notably lithium. This partnership underscores the rising importance of lithium in various sectors, from energy storage to pharmaceuticals. Lithium, denoted by the symbol Li, has atomic number 3 and is a silvery-white alkali metal. It was discovered in 1817 when Swedish chemist Johan August identified it within the mineral petalite. In 1821, William Brande successfully isolated lithium in its elemental form through the electrolysis of lithium oxide.Due to continuing exploration, measured and indicated lithium resources have increased substantially worldwide, totalling about 105 million tons as per the U.S. geological survey in 2024. Major lithium reserves are concentrated in South America’s ‘Lithium Triangle’—encompassing parts of Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. Australia is the leading producer, extracting lithium from hard-rock spodumene deposits. India’s lithium deposits are in Reasi (Jammu & Kashmir) and Mandya (Karnataka), with exploration ongoing in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Himachal Pradesh. The recent Indo-U.S. initiative aims to recover and process lithium.

In 1859, Alfred Baring Garrod published a paper in The London and Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science examining lithium’s potential to dissolve uric acid crystals, proposing its use for gout treatment. The hypothesis stemmed from chemical observations rather than clinical trials. While lithium salts showed promise in vitro, therapeutic applications were limited by toxicity and impractical dosing. The study marked one of the earliest discussions on lithium’s physiological effects, but its medical relevance remained uncertain.

In 1949, Australian psychiatrist John Cade published a seminal paper in the Medical Journal of Australia detailing his discovery of lithium’s antimanic properties. Cade hypothesised that mania was linked to a metabolic imbalance and conducted experiments, injecting guinea pigs with urine from manic patients, observing toxic effects. He administered various compounds to identify the poisonous substance, noting that lithium carbonate has a calming impact on the animals without sedation. Translating these findings to clinical practice, Cade treated ten patients with mania using lithium salts, reporting significant mood stabilisation and reduction in manic symptoms. This groundbreaking study introduced lithium as an effective treatment for mood disorders like acute mania and bipolar disorder.Melbourne’s Noack and Trautner (1951) and French psychiatrists Despinoy and De Romeuf (1951) independently tested lithium in manic patients, reporting effectiveness. Despite initial scepticism and concerns over toxicity, further studies, notably by Danish psychiatrist Mogens Schou in the 1950s and 60s, confirmed lithium’s efficacy as a mood stabiliser. By 1970, lithium was approved for the treatment of bipolar disorder in the United States.



Mechanism of action and ongoing mysteries

Lithium’s exact mechanism in stabilising mood disorders is not fully understood. It is hypothesised that it influences neurotransmitter activity and intracellular signalling pathways, by competing with sodium ions due to their chemical similarities as alkali metals. This competition may alter neuronal excitability and neurotransmission. Despite its long history of use, the precise biological underpinnings of lithium’s mood-stabilising effects continue to be a research subject. Lithium has a narrow therapeutic window (0.6–1.2 mEq/L), requiring regular monitoring to prevent toxicity. It is absorbed orally, distributed evenly in total bodywater, and is excreted unchanged via kidneys, necessitating renal function monitoring. It is not used in pregnant women.With lithium, the difference between an effective dose and a toxic dose is small. At therapeutic levels, lithium stabilises mood, but even slight elevations can lead to toxicity, causing neurological, renal, and cardiac complications. Lithium also interferes with thyroid function, leading to hypothyroidism. Over time, this can lead to fatigue, weight gain, and depressive symptoms, further complicating bipolar disorder management. Lithium exemplifies the Paracelsus’ principle—”the dose makes the poison”—whereby a slight deviation from the therapeutic range can turn it from a life-saving mood stabiliser into a toxic agent. It also has a delayed onset of action—often requiring weeks to show full effects—which means that more rapid-acting medications are usually preferred in acute manic episodes.Second-generation antipsychotics have emerged as viable alternatives to lithium due to their mechanism of action and better safety profile. Unlike lithium, which acts as the source

of bipolar disorder by inhibiting sodium-GPCR protein pumps in neurons, SGAs act at a downstream level by modulating neurotransmitter activity, particularly dopamine and serotonin. This difference means that while lithium exerts its effects at the root of the disorder by stabilising neuronal activity, SGAs regulate the symptoms more directly by blocking excessive neurotransmitter action.

Here’s how Indian card games are reshaping game nights and social gatherings



In living rooms, cafés, and weekend get-togethers, card games are quietly reshaping the social landscape in India. This past year has seen an influx of new designs — some built to test knowledge, others to fuel laughter or spark debate. From fitness challenges to fun drinking games, these decks have found a place in conversations and celebrations alike, reflecting a shift toward playful, interactive experiences. Card games are evolving into cultural snapshots, capturing the mood and humour of modern India.

At first glance, a fitness community creating a card game might seem like an unlikely pairing, but for The Quad, a Chennai based fitness community it was a natural extension of their shared goals. What began as a simple idea to make workouts more engaging soon evolved into a deck that encouraged movement, competition and camaraderie. “Fitness and exercise is a process. It requires intent and structure to bring movement into people’s lives. So much natural movement has been removed from our lives, and we wanted to find a way to bring that back,” says Ranjani Shanker, head of marketing at The Quad, which launched the card game Move It! (?399 on shop.thequad.in) In November last year.

“Move It! is a game that involves deduction skills and memory. If you have played Chinese Whispers and The New York Times Wordle, it is a combination of them, but with movement,” she says, adding that it took approximately six months to make the card game from conceptualisation to production. “We decided to go with a physical card game because we already have online courses that people subscribe to, and a card game seemed like a more tangible and fun way to bring people together,” she adds. According to Statista, a German online platform that specialises in data gathering and visualisation, table-top games or board games will experience an annual growth rate of 5.38% between 2024 and 2029 in India. This growth rate is being credited to the surge in the popularity of cards, with growing number of local designers creating innovative and culturally relevant games.

Proving this statistic right are Gurugram-based independent creators of card game Angry Indians (?599 on amazon.in), which is a satirical game based on strategy for “open-minded desi nerds”. Abhishek Sheel and Rhiju Talukdar, the co-creators of the game came up with the idea during peak covid lockdown. “We thought, why not make a card game because with table-top games, you have the freedom of making something as complex or as simple as you want and there’s an audience for both,” says Rhiju. “The concept of the game came from pent-up political angst, but we couldn’t be too loud or radical. We also did not know the mechanics of making a game, so we wanted to keep it light-hearted and doodley,” he says. They knew for sure that the mechanics had to involve attack and defend actions because the game is a satire on Indian pop-culture and modern way of life, which invariably includes a ton of friction, adds Rhiju.Rhiju says there was a lot of math involved: “I ended up re-learning probability related concepts I learnt in school to figure out the chances of winning and losing.” A single gameplay of Angry Indians can go on 10 minutes to 45 minutes and the playability is endless. “There are a number of strategies so you can keep playing in different ways. We sometimes get emails asking us if we can make certain moves that we hadn’t thought about ourselves,” says Abhishek, adding that there was a personal learning curve.

Then there is The Ultimate Indian Drinking Game (?999 on amazon.in) by New Delhi-based party game makers Dring. “For us extroverted people, the covid lockdown was a difficult time. My best friend from college and I invited some people over and played a drinking game that was made in the U.S. While it was a lot of fun, we realised that there were a lot of cultural differences so it was evident that it was not made for us,” says Kanishk Singhal, co-founder of Dring. The 55 deck of cards, launched in November 2020, needs three or more players with no upper limit. Each player takes turns drawing from a deck of cards and follows instruction written on it. If they fail, they need to drink. Cards come with instructions or ‘dares’ like — “balance a drink on your head and walk from one side of the room to the other. If you fail, take three sips” or “Send the 7th picture in your gallery to the 4th chat on your Whatsapp, or take five sips.”“After we marketed the game with a small video, we sold out of our entire stock of 400 boxes in three days. This made us realise that there is a market. India wants to play these games, but there is a gap,” he says. Dring currently has a catalogue of over ten different games with themes ranging from dating, Bollywood to women only, all catered to young adults.

“Now that the Indian designers and producers have started making games with these shared experiences, they are doing a much better job,” says Varun Devanathan, founder of The Board Room, a chain of table-top gaming cafes in Chennai. He adds, “We have access to a larger pool of players, so a lot of new designers take our help to test their games and players have been responding very well to Indian games,” he says, adding that a particularly interesting game is Chappal vs Cockroach (?999 on amazon.in) by Bengaluru-based startup Nightingame.

Printed at SMILYS ONLINE 6-7-48,VANASTHALIPURAM SHOPPING COMPLEX RANGAREDDY , RANGAREDDY, TELANGANA - 500070
Publisher,Editor: Kasoju Shankara Chary, PRGI NO: TGENG/26/A3169, Ph No: 9949791999, Email Id: eyesecretdaily@gmail.com