

EYE SECRETS

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English Daily

Rangareddy Vol No. 1 Issue 113

Date:Thursday, 10-9-2026

Price:2/-

Pages: 8

Telangana Govt Orders Probe Into Violence, Abuse of Assembly Speaker

Hyderabad, Sept 9

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Wednesday ordered a comprehensive inquiry into the chain of incidents involving BRS leaders, including the violence at the Legislative Assembly, derogatory remarks against Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Dalit protests at BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao's Erravalli farmhouse and the subsequent "purification" of roads near the farmhouse.

The Chief Minister alleged that a "conspiracy" was hatched at Chandrashekar Rao's farmhouse ahead of the Assembly's monsoon session to target the Speaker and disrupt the proceedings.



The probe will cover the BRS Legislature Party meeting chaired by the party chief at the farmhouse on September 6, the violence at the Assembly gates, alleged abusive remarks against the Speaker and attacks on police personnel and government employees on September 7, the Dalit protests at Erravalli on September 8 and the alleged purification programme carried out by BRS workers on September 9.

The inquiry will be headed by Hyderabad City Special Branch joint commissioner of police S.M. Vijay Kumar.

Revanth Reddy said the investigation would establish the roles of those who allegedly planned as well as those who executed them. Criminal cases would be registered against all those found responsible, he warned.

Making a statement in the Assembly, Revanth Reddy alleged that the BRS leadership had deliberately planned to prevent the House from functioning. He said the government had convened the session to discuss public issues, including Section 22A lands, and alleged that the BRS feared that a debate on such matters would cause political damage to the party.

The Chief Minister said the inquiry would also examine incidents involving inappropriate behaviour towards women personnel during the BRS protests at Assembly gates. The investigation would also establish the role of those who issued instructions and those who implemented them on the ground.

The controversy escalated after Dalit activists protested near Chandrashekar Rao's farmhouse on September 8, demanding an apology over the abusive remarks against the Speaker and his mother.

Revanth Reddy said the protesters had chosen the Erravalli location because they believed the conspiracy had been planned there. He maintained that Dalits had conducted a democratic protest by beating drums and raising slogans and had neither entered the farmhouse nor attacked anyone.

The Chief Minister strongly objected to the alleged "purification" of roads near the farmhouse by BRS workers, who reportedly sprinkled turmeric water on roads used by the Dalit protesters. Congress leaders alleged that the act amounted to treating the presence of Dalits in the area as desecration. The issue triggered a political storm in the Assembly on Wednesday, with Congress members demanding a debate in the House.

Revanth Reddy said the government would not tolerate untouchability, caste discrimination, attempts to create social tensions or incitement of violence. He said the roads did not need purification and that it was the discriminatory mindset that needed to change.

He also said political differences could not justify insulting the Speaker or his mother and recalled that several political parties had urged the BRS leaders concerned to apologise. Citing a social media post by BRS leader Sandhya Rao, he said that the purification programme was carried out on the instructions of Chandrashekar Rao.

"Using loopholes in legislations, people resorting to such acts may secure bails from courts, but society will not give them bail," Revanth Reddy said, asserting that both the conspirators and those who carried out their instructions would face legal action.

He said the inquiry would examine the entire sequence of events from the September 6 farmhouse meeting to the incidents at the Assembly and Erravalli, and vowed that his government would uphold constitutional safeguards and take action against caste discrimination and untouchability.

Congress questions delay in proroguing Parliament Monsoon session

NEW DELHI, SEPT 9

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh questioned the delay in proroguing Parliament's Monsoon session, alleging the government was seeking a two-thirds majority to pass delimitation-related constitutional



amendments. He said the ruling side lacked the numbers despite allegedly attempting to break up parties/Politics

New Delhi: The Congress on Wednesday questioned the delay in proroguing Parliament's Monsoon session, saying "something fishy" was going on and the government was trying to conjure up a "super-

tainted" two-thirds majority, but would not succeed in achieving that to get the Constitution amendment Bill involving delimitation passed.

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh said normally prorogation takes place three to four days after both Houses of Parliament are adjourned sine die. The gap in 2015 was 28 days and that record would soon be broken as 27 days had passed without prorogation for this year's Monsoon session, he said.

"There is definitely something fishy going on. The government has been aspiring and aiming for a super-tainted two-thirds majority, but they still lack the figures and are far from achieving that goal. They are breaking up parties, but they won't succeed in getting the super-tainted two-thirds majority to get the delimitation Bills passed," Ramesh told PTI.

During the Budget session on April 17, the Modi government faced a setback as the Constitution amendment Bill involving delimitation for the implementation of women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was defeated in the Lower House.

Of the 528 MPs who voted, 298 voted in support, while 230 opposed it. The Bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority.

BRS leaders, including party working president KT Rama Rao and MLAs T. Harish Rao and P. Sabitha Indra Reddy, among others, were allegedly man-handled by police personnel while they were on their way to attend the Assembly session. Track Congressional Bills

Centre Okays Rs 2K-cr Multi-tracking For TG

NEW DELHI, SEPT 9

The Centre on Wednesday approved eight multitracking projects of the railways worth Rs 20,800 crore across nine states. This includes five projects worth Rs 10,021 crore in four southern states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, increasing the existing network of Indian Railways by about 540 km.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "5 major railway projects worth over Rs 10,000 crore. Better rail connectivity in South India." "Lakhs of people to benefit. Today's Cabinet decision ensures faster passenger movement, stronger connectivity and additional freight capacity."

The approved projects include 110-km multitracking between Ghatkesar near Hyderabad and Kazipet via Yadigirigutta in



Telangana at an estimated cost of Rs 2,419 crore. The list will also include laying down of third and fourth line between Arakkonam in Tamil Nadu and Renigunta in Andhra Pradesh, and Whitefield and Bangarapet in Karnataka.

Congress flags Rs 10K crore 'tax evasion' racket via unrecognised parties

NEW DELHI, SEPT 9

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that more than Rs 10,000 crore in "black money" had been generated through registered unrecognised political parties (RUPPs), claiming they were being used as conduits to help individuals and companies claim tax deductions before returning much of the donated money in cash.

Congress former Rajya Sabha MP Shaktisinh Gohil also questioned the Election Commission and the Income Tax authorities over alleged inadequate action despite instances of fraudulent political donations coming under scrutiny.

Addressing a press conference here, Gohil claimed around 3,260 RUPPs were part of a system that allowed donors to reduce their tax liabilities through contributions ostensibly made to political parties.

"More than Rs 10,000 crore of black money has been generated through these fake political parties and there has been an open loot of tax revenue," Gohil said.

Explaining the alleged modus operandi, the Congress leader said individuals and companies made donations to RUPPs and claimed deductions available for political contributions under Sections 80GGC and 80GGB of the Income Tax Act. He alleged that this money did not necessarily remain with the political entity.

According to Gohil, people associated with such parties would retain a commission, ranging from two to 15 per cent, and return the balance to the donor in cash. The arrangement, he alleged, allowed donors to claim a legitimate-looking political contribution on paper while effectively converting the transaction into a mechanism for avoiding tax.

Gohil argued that the incentive could be particularly high for individuals earning more than Rs 5 crore, whose effective tax liability, after surcharge and cess, could cross 42 per cent.

The Congress leader claimed that the tax authorities and tribunals had already encountered instances of fraudulent claims involving political donations, but questioned why such cases had not resulted

in prosecution and stringent penalties against those responsible.

He referred to Sections 276C(1) and 277 of the Income Tax Act, dealing with wilful attempts to evade tax and false statements, and claimed provisions carrying severe financial penalties and imprisonment of up to seven years were available in cases of deliberate tax evasion.

Gohil alleged that neither the 200 per cent pen-



alty that could be imposed nor criminal prosecution had followed in the cases being highlighted by the Congress. The party also put the Election Commission in the dock, with Gohil referring to its 2014 guidelines on transparency and accountability in political funding.

He said political parties were required to disclose details relating to donations and expenditure, with relevant information also reaching the tax authorities, and questioned whether these safeguards were being effectively enforced.

Gohil demanded action against those allegedly creating or operating political parties as vehicles for tax evasion and sought accountability from the authorities responsible for monitoring political funding.

He also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the issue, accusing his government of maintaining silence on black money despite repeatedly making it a major political issue.

"PM Modi remains silent on black money," Gohil said, while renewing the Congress's charge that the government was presenting "fake GDP figures".

Man, mother held for sorcery-linked murder in Mancherial

Mancherial, Sept 9

A man and his mother were on Wednesday arrested on charges of murdering a woman at Nelkiventapur village in Dandepalli mandal on Tuesday night. Police seized an axe, mobile phone and a motorcycle from them.

Briefing details of the arrest to media persons in Luxettipet, Mancherial ACP R Prakash and Luxettipet Inspector Ramana Murthy said that Singathi Ramesh and Singathi Rambai from Nelki Venkatapur were ap-

prehended for their alleged involvement in the killing of Singathi Laxmi (45) from the same village over suspected sorcery.

During an interrogation, Ramesh reportedly confessed to hacking Laxmi to death suspecting she was practicing sorcery after his mother fell ill. He admitted to attacking her with an axe while she sat outside her house with Rambai safeguarding him. He disclosed that they both fled the scene after murdering Laxmi.

Hyderabad police form panel after BRS alleges assault on MLAs outside Assembly

Hyderabad: Sept 9

A team headed by Joint Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, SM Vijay Kumar will probe the entire episode surrounding the alleged manhandling of BRS MLAs outside the Telangana Legislative Assembly on Monday.

NIRANJAN, AEDLA PANDARI NATH STEER BHAGYANAGAR BJP’S ‘SEVA SANKALP ABHIYAN’

“Eye secrets bueareau “Hyderabad, September 8: The Bhagyanagar BJP has begun preparations for the month-long “Seva Sankalp Abhiyan”, to be conducted from September 17 to October 17 with a series of service-oriented programmes across the district.”“A preparatory workshop was held at Madhav Bhavan, Madannapet, on Tuesday evening under the guidance of Bhagyanagar District BJP President Shri J. Niranjn, with Seva Sankalp Abhiyan District Convenor Shri Aedla Pandari Nath coordinating the programme.”“During the workshop, Aedla Pandari Nath presented the campaign roadmap through a detailed PowerPoint presentation, explaining the proposed service activities, programme schedule and coordination requirements. The session provided district and divisional-level leaders and workers with a clear framework for implementing the initiative effectively.”“The campaign is being organised to mark 25 years of dedicated public service and commitment by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Participants discussed ways to ensure meaningful public outreach and active grassroots participation throughout the month-long programme.”“Shri Amarnath Sarangi, former official spokesperson for Telangana State, attended the workshop as the Chief Guest and spoke on the importance of service activities and community engagement.”“The programme was attended by Subhash Chandra Ji, Somireddy Surender Reddy, Srinath, Bokka Madhusudhan and Dheeraj, along with district office-bearers, state leaders, division presidents, Seva Sankalp Abhiyan team members, BJP leaders and party workers.”“The gathering concluded with a commitment to make the Seva Sankalp Abhiyan a successfully NIRANJAN, AEDLA PANDARI NATH STEER BHAGYANAGAR BJP’S ‘SEVA SANKALP ABHIYAN’“Eye secrets bueareau “Hyderabad, September 9: The Bhagyanagar BJP has begun preparations for the month-long “Seva Sankalp Abhiyan”, to be conducted from September 17 to October 17 with a series of service-oriented programmes across the district.”“A preparatory workshop

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Madhu Yashki Goud Appointed AIPC Chairperson Senior Congress Leader Entrusted with National-Level Responsibility



“HYDERABAD, SEPTEMBER 9 (EYE SECRETES): Senior Congress leader and former Member of Parliament Madhu Yashki Goud has been appointed Chairperson of the All India Professionals Congress (AIPC). The appointment was formally announced by AICC General Secretary K.C. Venugopal and has taken immediate effect.”“The appointment entrusts Goud with responsibility for an organisation established to facilitate engagement between the Congress and professionals representing various sectors. The AIPC provides a platform for interaction with professionals and experts and for discussions concerning public policy and issues of national relevance.”“Focus on Professional Participation”“The AIPC engages with professionals associated with information technology, medicine, law, education, finance, industry, science, technology and other specialised fields.”“Professional expertise has an important role in discussions relating to economic development, employment, healthcare, education, technology, urban development and governance. The organisation provides a structured avenue for professionals to participate in such discussions and share sector-specific perspectives.”“With his appointment, Goud will be responsible for providing organisational direction to the AIPC and facilitating its engagement with professional communities across the country.”“Organisational and Policy Responsibilities”“Madhu Yashki Goud has previously served as a Member of Parliament and held responsibilities within the Congress organisation. His parliamentary and organisational experience will form part of the background to his new assignment.”“The responsibilities associated with the position include strengthening professional networks, facilitating interaction with experts from different sectors and encouraging discussions on issues involving public policy and governance.”“The organisation’s effectiveness will depend on its ability to establish sustained engagement with professionals and provide appropriate platforms for constructive discussion.”“Engagement with Emerging Professional Groups”“The professional landscape in the country includes a growing number of young professionals, entrepreneurs, technology specialists, academics, healthcare practitioners and other skilled groups.”“Engagement with these sections requires structured communication and regular interaction. Professional forums, policy discussions and digital platforms can provide mechanisms for such engagement.”“The AIPC’s role in this area involves creating opportunities for professional perspectives to be presented and discussed within the broader framework of public affairs and policy.”“Scope for Policy-Oriented Dialogue”“Contemporary policy is-

sues increasingly involve specialised areas such as artificial intelligence, digital governance, technological development, employment, entrepreneurship, healthcare innovation, education and urban planning.”“Inputs from professionals working in these fields can contribute to informed discussions on such subjects. The AIPC therefore has a potential role in facilitating dialogue between domain experts and the political organisation.”“However, effective policy engagement requires continuous consultation, evidence-based discussion and consideration of broader public interests.”“Leadership Transition”“The Congress leadership has acknowledged the contribution of outgoing AIPC Chairperson Praveen Chakravarty and appreciated his role in the organisation.”“The change in leadership places the responsibility for the organisation’s next phase with Madhu Yashki Goud. His tenure will involve determining organisational priorities, strengthening professional engagement and coordinating activities across different regions.”“Responsibilities Ahead”“The principal organisational requirement will be to develop a broad-



based and sustainable network of professionals across the country.”“Given the diversity of professional sectors and viewpoints, maintaining regular and constructive engagement will require an inclusive and systematic approach.”“Equally important will be the organisation’s ability to ensure that professional participation contributes to substantive policy discussions rather than remaining limited to organisational activities.”“National Significance of the Assignment”“The appointment of Madhu Yashki Goud as AIPC Chairperson represents a significant national-level organisational responsibility within the Congress.”“The assignment places emphasis on professional outreach, expert engagement and policy-oriented dialogue. The future functioning of the AIPC under the new leadership will depend on its organisational expansion, the extent of professional participation and the quality of discussions conducted on matters of public importance.”“Kasaju Shankara chary “ editor

Why has Mumbai’s iconic Gaiety-Galaxy theatre suddenly shut?



One of Mumbai’s most recognisable cinema landmarks, Gaiety-Galaxy in Bandra, has been shut by the police after they found that its entertainment licence had allegedly not been renewed since 2021. The Bandra police have registered a case against the theatre owner, manager and the firm running the cinema under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which deals with disobedience of an order issued by a public servant. The police have also pasted a notice outside the cinema directing it to remain closed. A senior IPS officer confirmed the action and said the cinema would be allowed to re-open once its licence is renewed.

Punjab man, who questioned minister over drug menace, dies after consuming poison



A day after publicly questioning Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema over the easy availability of heroin in the state, a daily wageer from Sangrur allegedly consumed poison, alleging that his son had become addicted to the drug, and later died at Dayanand Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), Ludhiana, on Monday. In a video recorded before his death, Gulzar Singh, 47, who claimed to be unemployed, alleged, “Finance Minister Cheema had visited the village on Sunday to hear public grievances, where I raised the issue of the easy availability of ‘chitta’ (heroin). My son is addicted to drugs and has sold household belongings to sustain his addiction”. Gulzar Singh, a resident of Dirba constituency, alleged that the next morning, some people came to his house and threatened him for publicly raising the question of drug menace before the finance minister and told him that the village sarpanch and panchayat members wanted to meet him near the agricultural fields. “If I die, they all will be responsible for it,” Gulzar Singh said in the video.

The police on Tuesday registered a case against village sarpanch Baljinder Kaur, her husband Baljinder Singh alias Raj, and a panchayat member, Vicky Singh. The incident has once again put Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann’s native district Sangrur at the centre of a controversy. On September 2, a man was allegedly tortured in police custody for showing a black flag to CM Mann and raising slogans questioning the government’s claims on tackling the drug menace while he was addressing the masses in a village in Sangrur district. According to reports, Gulzar Singh allegedly got frightened after he was threatened to visit the sarpanch and consumed the poisonous substance instead of going to meet the panchayat members. The incident has also raised questions over the availability of emergency medical facilities in Punjab’s government hospitals. According to reports, Gulzar was initially taken to the Civil Hospital in Sangrur, from where he was referred to Rajindra Hospital, Patiala. As his condition de-

Chased to 3rd floor, Manipuri musician beaten to death at Delhi home

manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh (left) was 55 and is survived by his wife and a son. (Special Arrangement); (right) Two CCTV clips show the accused leaving the building and Singh’s family carrying him down 10 minutes later. Before he was beaten to death outside his South Delhi home, Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh, 55, was allegedly chased and assaulted by eight eatery workers in the stair lobby of the building where he lived with his wife and son on the third floor.

Two CCTV recordings of the incident, which took place in the Ashram area of Sunlight Colony, have emerged. In one of them, the accused are seen leaving the premises via the staircase. About 10 minutes later, Singh is seen being taken to hospital by his family members. Police said on Sunday around 11.30 pm, Singh came downstairs to dispose of garbage when he spotted some people, including workers from nearby eateries and food delivery agents, allegedly making noise. He reportedly objected to it, which led to a heated argument.

Police sources said the victim was chased into the staircase of his building, where the accused allegedly assaulted him in the stair lobby. CCTV footage shows them leaving at 12.06 am on Monday. At 12.16 am, Singh’s family members took him to a private hospital in Okhla, where he died of his injuries in the morning. Police have registered a case under Section 103(2), which deals with mob lynching by a group of five or more people, at the Sunlight Colony police station. Seven accused have been arrested. The eighth, a juvenile, has also been apprehended. Four of the accused worked at Saini Dhaba: Bharat Kumar, 19, and Pramod, 26, are food delivery agents; Deepanshu, 21, and Mohan Vishwakarma, 32, work in food packaging.

The other three are Ramzan Khan, 22, a food delivery agent at New Choudhary Dhaba; Vijay, 36, a food delivery agent at Annapurna Dhaba; and Mannu, 26, who works at Diamond Pizza kiosk. Pioneer of the Manipur’s rock music scene Singh, the lead guitarist of Manipur’s legendary rock band Phoenix in the early 1980s, was

“During an inquiry through the Theatre Branch, we found that the licence had not been renewed since 2021,” the officer said. In Mumbai, cinema theatres are required to obtain a Premises Licence from the Commissioner of Police. The licence has to be renewed every year after payment of the prescribed fee and submission of an undertaking confirming compliance with safety requirements, including fire safety norms, police said. “The FIR has been registered and the cinema has been closed. If the licence is renewed, it will be allowed to function,” the officer said. The closure notice put up by the Bandra police says the cinema has been closed for the next few shows due to non-renewal of its licence. The theatre management, however, has given a different reason for the shutdown. The Indian Express contacted executive director Manoj Desai for his response, but he did not respond to calls or messages. A social media post attributed to Desai said the cinema had been shut because of a technical problem. According to the post, some cables inside the theatre had burnt out and replacement cables had been arranged from Lohar Chawl in south Mumbai. The management said shows would resume once the problem was fixed. Gaiety-Galaxy, which opened in 1972, initially had three screens Gaiety, Galaxy and Gemini. Four more screens Glamour, Gem, Gossip and Grace were later added, giving the complex its popular identity as G7.

teriorated, he was brought back to Sangrur and admitted to a private hospital before finally being shifted to DMCH, Ludhiana, where he died late on Monday. BJP local leader Daaman Bajwa alleged that almost seven hours were taken to shift Gulzar from one hospital to another. “It is shocking that government hospitals in Punjab did not have adequate arrangements to treat a patient who had consumed poison. Perhaps his life could have been saved had he received timely treatment,” Bajwa said. I’d asked police to take appropriate action Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema, while talking to The Indian Express, however, denied any role in the circumstances that allegedly led Gulzar to consume poison.

“Yes, I went to Toor Banzara village on Sunday as I regularly meet people in my constituency. Gulzar Singh raised the issue of drug availability and told me that his son was a drug addict. I listened to his grievance and even asked the police to take appropriate action against those involved in the supply of drugs,” Cheema said. “I do not know what happened on Monday or under what circumstances he consumed poison. It is a matter of serious investigation. The police are looking into it, and action will be taken against anyone found guilty as per law,” he added. Responding to allegations that Gulzar was threatened, Cheema said the Opposition was trying to create a “wrong narrative”. “The man questioned me, and I listened to him. It is unfortunate that he lost his life,” the finance minister said. It is also learnt that the Sangrur police had visited Gulzar’s house on Monday to take his son to a de-addiction centre. Meanwhile, Rupinder Kaur Bajwa, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Dirba, said Gulzar’s death is a case of suicide. “We will take action based on the statement of the family,” she said. The DSP, however, said that the police had not received any statement from the family linking Gulzar’s death to the incident where he questioned the finance minister or the alleged threats that followed. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia, on X, shared that Gulzar Singh’s death was the price of speaking truth. He said, “In the rule of the Guru Dokhi, asking questions has become a crime! In Dirba, a helpless father from Toor Banjaran village asked Cabinet Minister Harpal Cheema from the heart: “My young son openly consumes drugs. Why don’t you stop the drug trade?” The price of speaking the truth? The police pushed him aside, while AAP leaders pressured him to apologise! Distressed by this humiliation, Gulzar Singh consumed a poisonous substance! He slammed CM Bhagwant Mann for taking cases against people who raise questions about the drug menace. Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring expressed grief over Gulzar Singh’s death.



Two CCTV recordings of the incident, which took place in the Ashram area of Sunlight Colony, have emerged. In one of them, the accused are seen leaving the premises via the staircase. About 10 minutes later, Singh is seen being taken to hospital by his family members.

regarded as a pioneer of the state’s rock music scene. He began his music career as the lead guitarist of a band called Ultra Vires. After his stint with Phoenix, he joined another well-known local band, Eastern Dark. He later left Manipur and continued his career as a music teacher in New Delhi. Singh came from a family with a strong musical legacy. His mother, Chongtham Kamala, is a renowned classical singer from Manipur who was once regarded as the “Lata Mangeskar of the Manipuri film industry”.

EYE SECRETS

Editorial

With apologies to Sartre and Camus, what is life for?

Most of the time, we deliberately use certain things to achieve particular purposes. Let us say we purchase a pen with the intention of writing something down. Once the writing is done, it gives us a feeling of satisfaction at having accomplished that specific goal, and that gives us the sense of meaning we intended to attain. Such activities, however small or large, are simply a routine part of our lives. But if we ponder a little more about what world-renowned thinkers like Albert Camus have interpreted as the purpose of life, it prompts us to think a bit more seriously.

Camus is famous for his brainchild idea of absurdism, a philosophy that perceives the world we live in as altogether different from our comprehension and expectations. There is invariably a tendency for conflict, according to him, between human perception and the reality of what is going on around us. He advocated that we have to face absurd situations involving things, persons, interactions or circumstances boldly and respond to them by means of philosophical revolt. On the other hand, Jean Paul Sartre, whose mind-baffling statement was “man is condemned to be free”, revolutionised the way we view the world in usual terms. When everything in life and society is in no pre-set order, humans are bound to be at liberty to make their own choices and decisions, he reasoned. That means Camus says that there is no pre-existing purpose or meaning to life, and so one should live as life unfolds, confront the absurd situations that surround us, and proceed to respond in one’s own way without regret. In contrast, Sartre says that there is no pre-defined essence to life and hence one should create purpose and meaning by making choices and decisions freely. If we go by the assertions of these Nobel laureates, some unsettling questions automatically pop up. Is human life really purposeless? Does it have no meaning unless created by ourselves as we continue living? Is the act of surviving the vagaries of life and the surrounding world just an inevitable habit of imitating others and following their path? Are riddles such as “Why am I here on this planet?” and “What have I come into this world for?” simply illusory questions that we thoughtfully or by default usually avoid pondering?

Such predicaments often force us to explore anti-theoretical observations about the nature of reality. Examining specific research findings directs our attention to scientific facts. Consider the appendix, a small organ attached to the large intestine that was long assumed to have no significance or purpose. Later, emerging evidence indicated that it plays a vital role in gut health. Similarly, the thymus was initially dismissed as vestigial but was later found, through experimental methods, to be crucial for immune function and overall health. These instances demonstrate that purpose, though sometimes invisible, can explicitly emerge over time. This leads us to another component that offers a compelling argument for a more revealing view of larger purpose while critiquing the conceptualisations of Sartre and Camus, namely human consciousness. To date, although various schools of thought have proposed different explanations for how and why consciousness emerged in the body, one approach that has gained traction recently points towards the evolutionary process of human development.

Three men sent to jail for attacking Bengaluru cops with machete 7 years ago



A Bengaluru court on Monday handed down jail sentences to three men who attacked a police team that tried to arrest them in 2019. The police shot one of them in the leg during the encounter. Additional City Civil and Sessions Judge Rashmi M convicted Goutham, Prashanth Singh alias Andu, and Salman Khan—who had been wanted in an attempted murder case when they attacked personnel from a Yeshwanthpur police station with a machete. The court sentenced Goutham to seven years’ imprisonment and Prashanth and Salman to six months in prison. However, Goutham has already spent six years in jail without bail. Prashanth and Salman, sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, have already spent five years and nine months in jail, respectively. The court ordered the time already served to be set off against the sentences. According to the prosecution, a police team went to Pipeline Road behind the Platinum City apartment complex in the early hours of January 27, 2019, on receiving a tip-off that the men wanted in a case from the previous month were there. The court found that when the police approached, the men shouted that the officers were “Yeshwanthpur police” and threatened to kill them, brandishing the machete. As two constables moved to catch Goutham, he struck them on their hands with the weapon, injuring both. Police Inspector Y Mudduraja fired a warning shot in the air and, when the assault continued, shot Goutham in the leg. The other two fled the scene. Goutham was taken to hospital for treatment of his gunshot wound. The court also rejected the men’s argument that a nearby apartment’s security guard and CCTV footage were never examined, noting that nothing suggested the cameras would have covered the actual spot of the incident.

After husband’s cancer death, startup founder vows to cut chemicals from soil



Pune-based Dr Rajul Patkar lost her husband, the eminent IIT Bombay academician, Prof Sachin Patkar, to cancer on August 19 after fighting it for five months. Even as she grieves, Patkar is convinced about the life-saving impact of her startup, Proximal Soilsens Technologies, which focuses on developing portable soil sensors that provide farmers with real-time data on nutrients, moisture, weather and crop growth. Based in Bhugaon, on the outskirts of Pune, Proximal Soilsens Technologies, formed in 2017, offers a pocket-sized soil testing system that weighs 100 gm and can be attached to a cell phone. The team is small and specialised, with experts like Dr Mukul Singh from IIT Bombay in leadership roles.

Patkar was the first student at IIT Bombay’s electrical engineering department to work on sensors to help farmers detect the amount of nitrates, phosphates, organic carbon, and potassium, among others, in the soil. “There are a lot of pesticides that we are consuming along with other chemicals. Excess chemicals are being added to the soil. Microplastics are present in both the soil and the sea. I would like to spread awareness and ensure that farmers do not use pesticides and other chemicals indis-

criminately,” the CEO of Proximal Soilsens Technologies says even as she rattles off the latest cancer statistics.

“The world has become so polluted that there is a 46 per cent probability — one out of two people—of getting cancer. In the US, more people die from cancer than from heart attacks, and India is not far behind,” she says. Patkar points out that government lab results on soil testing are usually delayed, losing critical time for fertiliser application. “When we put excess chemicals, we risk the health of the people who consume the products,” says Patkar. “At present, farmers apply nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium or other chemicals to the soil based on general recommendations, without understanding the soil. Most farmers are unaware of the importance or benefits of soil testing. Government soil testing laboratories are inadequate in number for the crore of farmers present in India,” says Patkar. The sensor for micronutrients also provides real-time data on crop growth, weather, and moisture content. The project has received funding and other support from NITI Aayog’s flagship programme, Atal Innovation Mission, incubator Venture Center, and IIT Startups, among others. Made from scratch, the sensor technology uses sensitive strips to test soil for different parameters. The device is being used by Agri businesses across Maharashtra, Assam, Punjab, Telangana, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Almost 10,000-15,000 farmers are covered, but Patkar wants to break into larger farming communities that are hesitant to adopt innovative technology. “We cannot eliminate every environmental risk. Wherever science and technology can help us reduce unnecessary chemical use, protect our soil and make agriculture more sustainable, we should act,” she says. For Patkar, continuing that work is now more than building a company. It is a way of turning personal grief into a larger purpose.

‘Don’t want a ban on festivals, only on noise pollution’: Pune activist Vidyanand Bapat



Pune activist Vidyanand Bapat has been campaigning against the use of DJs, loudspeakers, and dhol-tashas during Ganeshotsav and other public celebrations and recently stepped up his calls for tighter restrictions on noise levels during festivals. Last week, Bapat, 37, was allegedly assaulted as he was speaking to a news channel about his campaign, with footage showing the assailant confronting him before hitting him. Bapat spoke to The Indian Express a few days after the attack on him about how he plans to take the movement ahead.

Q. Are you fearful after the attack on you?

Bapat: No, not at all. Because even before that, during a live TV debate and in person, many people advised me to seek police protection. But I haven’t asked for it because of my Left-leaning ideology; I don’t want a dedicated police officer as a common citizen. This battle against noise pollution should be fought with crusader spirit. A crusader will say that if you die while fighting for a cause, you will go to heaven. And if you win, you will achieve your purpose in this life.

Q. Why didn’t you speak out last year or during other religions’ festivals? Many are asking: why did you choose to speak out only during the Ganesh festival?

Bapat: This question was posed even when Dr Narendra Dabholkar was alive, and he gave the same answer about eradicating superstition. If you look at the demographic statistical distribution of India, the population which is called Hindu or which celebrates Hindu festivals is some 80 per cent, which means four-fifths of the entire population of India. It is very natural that the criticism will be centred on those festivals because the noise levels of those festivals will certainly be much larger than those of the minority religion. Otherwise, in principle, we have opposition to all kinds of public discomfort, not just happening under the religious festivals of other religions, but even under any other pretext, such as political or electoral propaganda.

Q. Do you have a concrete model that you can suggest?

Bapat: Yes, we are offering a win-win solution. We are not advocating a total ban on festival celebrations or even public celebrations of festivals. Our objection concerns only public festivals, not those celebrated in households or family life, such as Ganesh Festival, Dahi Handi, and Navratri. Festival enthusiasts should ensure they avoid noise pollution and traffic obstruction. To do so, they can celebrate inside an enclosed auditorium or any similar enclosed, soundproof facility, for which MPCB certification is now mandatory. Once you celebrate it inside such a facility, the noise which gets created, whether by playing drums, tom-toms, or any other musical instruments or by playing a loudspeaker, will remain confined only to those who want to celebrate or who want to watch that festival celebration. It will not leak outside, and it will not disturb others nearby.

Q. What if the prescribed decibel limits are followed? Would you still have an issue?

Bapat: The prescribed limits are very difficult to follow. We believe the law should be followed in spirit, not just by letter. These decibel limits can be applied to equipment that is not meant for sound amplification, but due to the very large scale of operation, they emit some type of noise, like, say, a generator, pneumatic drills or a railway engine. These noise decibel limits are the cap, meaning the maximum noise allowed in a particular area. It doesn’t mean that you can make noise up to that limit. You should maintain silence as much as possible. But if this noise is being emitted due to some factors beyond your control, like a very large scale of operation in the case of generators, then it should not exceed this limit. For instruments such as a loudspeaker, whose sole purpose is sound amplification, they should be used only inside an enclosed, soundproof auditorium, so there is a win-win situation.

Q. Are you part of any organisation that is working for a ban on noise pollution?

Bapat: I have not been part of any organisation working exclusively against noise pollution. A few organisations are working on the issue. I was noticed because I spoke publicly about it in the meeting to discuss this year’s Ganesh festival celebration. Many organisations share the same objectives, and we are on the verge of forming a formal group to address noise pollution and work to resolve it. After its formation, our organisation would take up the noise pollution issue beyond the Ganesh festival and pursue it at the legislative or judicial level.

Q. Have you reached out to political leaders over the issue?

Bapat: I wrote a letter to the city MP and Union Minister Murlidhar Mohol. An acknowledgement has been received. The city MP said he opposes any noise pollution caused by religious celebrations. Others, including Rajya Sabha MP Medha Kulkarni and legislator Siddharth Shirole, have expressed concern over increasing noise pollution. We will reach out to political parties and seek an amendment to the law to ban music that causes noise pollution during any festival, irrespective of religion.

Q. Two protests took place against DJs in the city. But you skipped both. This is strange, especially when you have become the leading voice against sound pollution. Do you want to run a campaign on your own, in isolation? Bapat: Regarding the first protest, I was told that it had been cancelled, but it was not. I could not make it to the second protest because I was not well. In future, I will make it a point to participate in the protests.

Q. You seem to be very well-read on these topics, and there is a lot of appreciation of your vocabulary on social media as well. Can you recommend any books? Bapat: I can recommend Ek Zunj Gongatashee by Dr Y T Oke.

Q. Do you expect this year’s Ganeshotsav in Pune will be without DJs? A few other cities in the state have taken this decision.

Bapat: Yes. The festival is still 8-9 days away. For now, we are requesting and urging bureaucrats and the government to exercise their discretion in favour of citizens rather than festivals. But at a larger scale, we want to fix that loophole. We want to remove the discretionary power that bureaucrats and the government have to grant permission for loudspeakers. So that even if festival enthusiasts ask for permission to use loudspeakers in the open air or even their musical instruments, they won’t be able to allow them because they won’t have any authority. We are trying to get it at both levels. It can also be done through the legislature and judiciary.

Q. Has your activism affected your work?

Bapat: I recently left my job, and I am looking for another. I had to leave for different reasons even before this began. I haven’t thought seriously about working as a full-fledged social activist. I want to do my regular job.

Retired TGSRTC staff detained for staging protest near Assembly

Hyderabad: Several retired employees of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) were taken into custody by police on Tuesday when they attempted to stage a protest near the Telangana Legislative Assembly, demanding the release of their long-pending dues. The retired employees, who gathered to press for payment of salary arrears, leave encashment and other retirement benefits, tried to move towards the Assembly to draw the government’s attention to their grievances. Police personnel intervened and took the protesters into custody before shifting them to a nearby police station. The retirees have been repeatedly seeking clearance of dues that they say have remained pending for several years. In June, hundreds of retired TGSRTC employees staged a protest at Bus Bhavan demanding arrears relating to the 2017 and 2021 pay revisions and leave encashment. They said individual dues ranged from around Rs.5 lakh to Rs. 10 lakh and alleged that several retired employees had died without receiving their arrears. T

Rahul Gandhi, Kejriwal on Manipur musician’s killing in Delhi



“Growing lawlessness,” “painful wounds of atrocities faced by people from the North East in the capital”: The murder of Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh by a group of men who allegedly beat him to death outside his South Delhi home has drawn condemnations and sharp reactions from across the political spectrum. Chongtham, a well-known musician from Manipur who was regarded as a pioneer of the state’s rock scene, was beaten to death around 11.30 pm on Sunday when he reportedly stepped out of his home in Kilokari village and asked the men not to make noise.

Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Rahul Gandhi called for a swift investigation into the case and said that the incident calls into question the safety of people from North East India residing in the capital. “A father, killed outside his own home, in his own country’s capital. After many such incidents, every Northeast family in Delhi is asking the same question today – are we safe here? What are [Amit] Shah’s MHA and Delhi Police doing to stop this growing lawlessness, especially against people from the Northeast? There must be a swift investigation, and the culprits must be brought to justice. My condolences to Vikram ji’s family,” he said. Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal too hit out at the law and order situation in Delhi.

“This is extremely unfortunate. Forget taking swift and exemplary action against the guilty, often the accused belong to their own party and the entire machinery starts protecting the guilty. A common citizen is now finding himself helpless against their party and government,” he said. The incident has also drawn calls of concern from National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leaders from the North East, such as Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who leads BJP-ally National People’s Party. Disturbed by the assault incident that led to the tragic demise of musician Chongtham Vikram Singh from Manipur in Delhi. This incident has once again reopened the painful wounds of atrocities faced by people from the North East in the capital. Call upon the authorities and Delhi Police to ensure those responsible are dealt with the strictest consequences,” he said. Congress Lok Sabha MP for Inner Manipur Bimol Akojiam said that he is in close contact with Chongtham’s family, and authorities in the police and AIIMS. “Whether a person is from India’s Northeast or the so-called ‘mainstream’ or ‘mainland’ India, life with dignity matters; exemplary punishment must be given to those who have snatched away our beloved Vikram, a gentle soul and gifted, pioneering guitarist!,” he said.

After 7 die in Satya Niketan collapse, PIL seeks hostel policy for Delhi

Another public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Delhi High Court after the Satya Niketan hostel collapse that left seven people dead, seeking directions to the Delhi government to formulate and implement a time-bound hostel development policy and to Delhi University to provide hostel facilities in each of its colleges. The PIL, filed by National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) national president Vinod Jakhar, was mentioned for urgent listing on Tuesday. The court, however, declined to list it urgently. “Can this direction be issued by way of an interim mandamus (order)? It will be taken up tomorrow. Unnecessarily you waste your own time. Can such a direction be issued (by the court)?,” Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya remarked to advocate Vimal Tyagi, representing Jakhar. On Monday, while hearing another PIL, a division bench headed by Chief Justice Upadhyaya had observed that the responsibility for the building collapse lies not only with the PG owner but also extends to DU and civic authorities, while flagging the “absolutely inadequate” number of hostels available to students. CJ Upadhyaya had remarked that the shortage of university and government hostels was forcing students into potentially unsafe PGs and hostels, and questioned whether authorities had done enough to regulate such accommodation. It directed the MCD to inspect all buildings housing PGs and hostels and prepare a report in a week on whether requisite permission/building byelaws were followed during construction. Jakhar, in his PIL, flagged that the Satya Niketan building collapse “serves as a grave warning regarding the risks faced by thousands of students who are dependent upon privately operated accommodation in different parts of Delhi because their respective colleges do not have adequate hostel facilities”. He requested that “where sufficient land is available within a college campus, hostel facilities may be constructed or expanded” and where individual colleges “face genuine land constraints, the authorities may develop common/cluster hostels at suitable locations catering to students of neighbouring University colleges”. Pressing for a university-wide hostel policy, Jakhar in his plea said the authorities are “required to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the residential requirements of students across all colleges, departments and institutions of the University of Delhi”, and undertake “construction or expansion of college hostels... in a phased manner.” He has also written to the offices of Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Sandhu, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, the University Grants Commission chairman, education ministry and DU vice-chancellor on September 7, highlighting acute shortage of residential facilities for DU students. DU’s motto of ‘residential university’ Jakhar’s PIL also highlighted that DU, established in 1922, records in its own official description that it was established as a “unitary, teaching and residential University”. From recording 750 students at its inception, the varsity now sees approximately 1,32,435 students studying in its regular courses... more than 104 years have elapsed since the establishment of the University, yet adequate institutional shelter has not been created commensurate with its present student population and geographical expansion,” the PIL noted.

S8 tension: cosmologists can't agree on how clumpy the universe is



Cosmology is in for exciting times, going by the latest research that suggests the key to revealing the fundamental nature of the universe lies in finding out how clumpy it is. Accepted theory has it that after the universe was explosively born in a 'Big Bang' in the void some 13.8 billion years ago, it expanded, engendering galaxies, star clusters, solar systems, and planets. When scientists looked at the cosmic microwave background (CMB) — the radiation left over from the Big Bang itself — they saw an absolutely smooth glow across the sky. The early universe must have been remarkably uniform, they concluded, with only small variations in density (of about one part in 100,000 when it was 380,000 years old).

How did matter in the universe get to be so lumpy today after starting out so evenly? The 'lumps' we see in the universe arose from different chunks of matter like galaxies and dark matter — a hypothetical, invisible form of matter that doesn't interact with light or electromagnetic radiation and which makes up a significant portion of the universe — being pulled together by gravitational forces. Over the years, cosmologists have tried to map the overall spread of matter through the early universe. In the standard cosmological model, called the Lambda Cold Dark Matter (Λ CDM) model, dark matter and dark energy — the mysterious force that drives the expansion of the universe — comprise about 95% of the universe. The interplay between these components influences how the primordial fluctuations evolved into the large-scale structures that we observe today. Cosmologists use the term Σ_8 , or S_8 , to quantify the matter around us. This matter is made up of baryonic particles, such as protons and neutrons, that bunch up in different regions of space. The value of S_8 is calculated by studying various regions of the universe. Each region is defined by an astronomical length scale of approximately 26 million light-years. Within these regions, cosmologists count the number of galaxies and other cosmic structures, such as galactic clusters and filaments, to assess the distribution of matter.

A higher value for S_8 ? indicates more clustering with a greater amount of matter clumped together, while a lower value indicates a more uniform distribution of matter. A problem arose when cosmologists used different ways to measure the value of S_8 and came up with different estimates. This lack of agreement has come to be called the ‘ S_8 tension’ in astrophysics. Cosmic-shear surveys Astronomers have conducted galaxy surveys to determine the value of S_8 . One method involves measuring the distortion in the shape of galaxies as seen from the earth: an effect known as cosmic shear. These distortions occur when starlight passes through a galactic cluster and is bent and amplified by gravitational forces, much like a magnifying glass does. Astronomers use this gravitational lensing to study indistinct epochs in the evolution

Expanding tree cover is crucial

As climate change accelerates, tree plantation and carbon sequestration are essential for environmental sustainability. For India, a rapidly growing economy reliant on carbon-intensive industries, expanding tree cover is crucial for mitigating climate change while supporting industrial growth and rural livelihoods. India's forest and tree cover is 25.17%, significantly below the 33% target set by the National Forest Policy of 1988. This shortfall has serious implications, as deforestation, rapid urbanisation, and industrial emissions continue to degrade ecosystems.

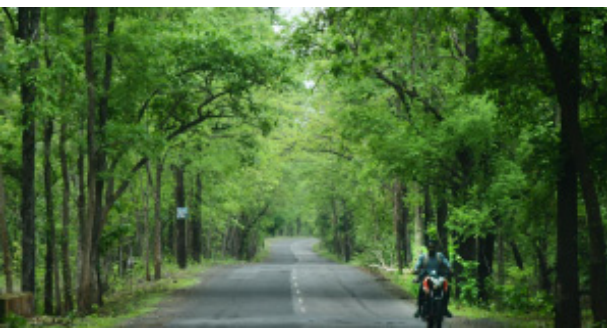
Tree plantations act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂). However, in India, this sequestration potential needs to be enhanced through large-scale afforestation programmes. Beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increased tree cover improves soil health, recharges groundwater, retains water, reduces soil erosion, and enhances resilience against extreme weather events. Recognising this, India has introduced several policies and initiatives to accelerate afforestation efforts. The National Agroforestry Policy (2014) and the Trees Outside Forests in India Program encourage private landowners, farmers, and industries to participate in large-scale tree planting. They aim to reduce dependence on natural forests for timber and fuelwood, restore degraded ecosystems, and provide additional income sources for rural communities.

The Green India Mission, part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, has been instrumental in reviving degraded forests and promoting sustainable forest management. According to government data, GIM has helped increase forest cover by 0.56% between 2017 and 2021. Corporate social responsibility initiatives have also contributed to large-scale tree plantation drives. Companies in sectors such as automobile manufacturing, cement, and energy have undertaken afforestation projects to offset emissions. Many corporations are also integrating afforestation efforts into their carbon credit strategies, allowing them to claim emission reductions while restoring ecosystems. Indian industries face growing pressure to reduce their carbon footprint due to stringent international regulations. The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, set to be enforced in 2026, will impose tariffs on carbon-intensive imports such as steel, cement, and aluminium. As trade between India and the EU reached \$124 billion in 2023, these tariffs could greatly impact Indian exporters. To remain competitive in global markets, industries are increasingly investing in carbon-offset projects, including large-scale tree plantations. Such investments help companies align with global sustainability standards, earn carbon credits under frameworks such as the Verified Carbon Standard and Clean Development Mechanism, and offset emissions in a cost-effective manner instead of purchasing expensive international carbon credits. Sustainability is no longer about regulatory compliance — it has become

of the universe. Cosmic-shear surveys help to map the diffusion of matter, including dark matter, in the universe so cosmologists can deduce the amplitude of matter fluctuations as quantified by S_8 .

The results of the latest such survey were recently published in the journal *Physics* by an international team of researchers from the University of Tokyo. They used the Hyper Suprime-Cam (HSC) — a camera installed on the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii — to collect data and came up with a value of 0.747 for S_8 , which tallies with the values found by previous surveys. “The Subaru HSC survey is one of the deepest wide area surveys of the sky,” Surhud S. More, a co-author of the study and professor of astrophysics at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune, wrote in an email. He added that the researchers probed matter’s distribution using the gravitational lensing effect down to small scales. “We were able to show that any movement of ordinary matter, such as gas within the large-scale structure of the universe, will not be sufficient to explain the smaller value of the clumpiness which had been found in our previous study.” In other words, the discrepancy in S_8 has to do with the dark matter and dark energy that pervades the cosmos. While this reaffirms that all is well with the Λ CDM model, it does not dispel the S_8 tension itself: studies like this were based on gravitational lensing to determine the value of S_8 to be 0.747, which does not agree with the higher value predicted by data from the CMB.

Cosmologists consider the CMB to be a better tool to look back in space and time. They have known for a long time that the surge of primordial matter in the CMB holds clues to the universe's origins in the form of 'ripples' generated by the expanding universe. These ripples resulted in lumps and bumps — future star clusters and galaxies — in the otherwise uniform fabric of space. These telltale galactic signatures were detected in 1992 by NASA's Cosmic Background Explorer satellite. But with the S8 tension persisting, the Λ CDM model looks to be in need of modification — unless some as yet undiscovered systematics could affect such a conclusion. As Prof. More said, "One of the main difficulties in using deep surveys such as Subaru HSC is our lack of understanding of how fast the galaxies in these surveys are actually receding from us, quantified by the redshift [increase in wavelength] of certain lines in their spectrum. As the millions of galaxies used in these analyses are faint, one cannot analyse the spectrum of light of these galaxies to determine this redshift. This constitutes one of the major uncertainties that still remains unresolved before we start entirely doubting the standard theory of cosmology." Last year, data from the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument in Arizona in the US suggested that the push of dark energy — represented by the cosmological constant Λ in the Λ CDM model — is weakening and that the universe may actually be decelerating over time. The possibility of dark energy getting weaker means that the pace of expansion of the universe will eventually slow down and may, at some point, even turn negative. In that case, it is not inconceivable that the universe will collapse in on itself in a 'big crunch'. In any case, the task of updating the Λ CDM model will become easier when the Rubin Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST) begins operating later this year. The LSST will launch from the Vera C. Rubin Observatory being built in northern Chile, using its camera — the largest ever built — to peer back in space and time like never before. Who knows what answers this unparalleled wide-field astronomical survey of the universe,



a strategic advantage. Companies are integrating sustainability into their operations by developing green supply chains, sourcing raw materials from sustainable forestry projects, and implementing energy-efficient manufacturing processes. With global capital markets increasingly favouring environmental, social, and governance principles, Indian industries must adapt to maintain their market position. Tree plantations also offer economic and social benefits. Large-scale afforestation initiatives create millions of jobs, especially in nursery management, forest conservation, and agroforestry. These are particularly vital for rural communities. Agroforestry, which integrates trees into agricultural systems, is a particularly promising approach. It enhances soil fertility by improving nutrient cycling, provides additional income from timber, fruits, and medicinal plants, and increases resilience to droughts and erratic weather conditions. A study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research found that agroforestry can increase farm incomes by 20-30%. To support community-led afforestation, government and non-governmental organisations have stepped in to provide financial incentives, training and capacity-building programmes to educate farmers and rural workers, and market linkages to help communities sell forest-based products. These foster a sense of responsibility and ownership. Policy recommendations Despite its benefits, large-scale tree plantation faces several challenges. One is the rising cost of carbon credits. In 2023, the average price of carbon credits under the EU Emissions Trading System was €83 per tonne of CO₂. For Indian businesses, investing in afforestation offers a more cost-effective solution than purchasing expensive carbon credits from international markets. Another challenge is the absence of a robust carbon trading policy in India. To fully capitalise on global carbon markets, India must establish a transparent national carbon credit registry, a well-defined regulatory framework under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and financial incentives to encourage private-sector investments in afforestation. As India strives to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070, tree plantations and carbon sequestration will be key pillars of its sustainability strategy. The risks of inaction are too high. B.B.L. Madhukar, Chairman, FORE School of Management, and Director General, BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry

A graphic novel that brings to life Francis Buchanan's survey of South India



Dr. Sashi Sivramkrishna's recently published graphic novel, *A Journey into the Furnace of History: The Dying Embers of Ancient Iron-Smelting in India*, has an origin story that spans nearly two decades. The kernel for this book, which documents Sashi's own attempts to retrace the journey of the Scottish physician, botanist and surveyor Francis Buchanan through the erstwhile Mysore State, emerged in the early 2000s when he was working on a documentary on the curse of Talakadu. "It is an interesting story about the Mysore Maharajas combined with two natural phenomena," says the Bengaluru-based economist and the chairman of the Foundation to Aid Industrial Recovery (FAIR), a not-for-profit society that focuses on helping the country's under-managed sectors. This 400-year-old curse, which is believed to have been uttered by Queen Alamelamma, the queen of the once-strong but now crumbling Vijayanagara Empire, when the Wadiyars dethroned her husband and took over Mysore, had three parts to it: Talakadu would become a desert, the river Malangi would turn into a whirlpool, and the Mysore Kings would bear no heirs.

Although he is someone who “could not believe that curses come true...I am quite a rationalist”, he thought of investigating this story, going into the project with an open mind. “Wherever we went, in Mysore and places around it, people generally believed in it,” he recalls. And while there appeared to be some anecdotal evidence, with many of the Mysore rulers failing to beget heirs and having to adopt, “it all seemed very confusing,” says Sashi, who researched the subject, with a colleague, for a year and a half, “getting stuck along the way, because there was very little evidence about all this.” In 2005, as part of his research, Sashi visited the library of the Mythic Society on Bengaluru’s Nrupathunga Road, looking through some references, when he came across Buchanan’s three-volume survey titled *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, published in 1807. Buchanan, who became a medical officer with the British East India Company in 1794, had been commissioned to survey South India in 1800, following the death of Tipu Sultan and the British’s decisive victory over the Kingdom of Mysore. While going through the survey, he discovered this. “Buchanan had visited Malangi, and he does talk about some curse and states that Talakadu was covered in sand,” says Sashi, who went on to make a film about the curse in 2005. “That was my introduction to Buchanan.”

Sashi then found himself delving deeper into Buchanan's work, becoming increasingly fascinated by this survey. "Normally, when you look at history, it is about battles and wars," he says. "But here, Buchanan touches upon people and the day-to-day life in these places. He talks about farmers, agricultural labourers, people weaving blankets, things we don't usually learn as part of our history education." That is when he decided that he wanted to trace Buchanan's journey, travelling back and forth, between Bengaluru and the places chronicled in *Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*, trying to understand whether the occupations Buchanan had described continued to exist.

Breathing life into Vembanad lake



Vembanad, the longest lake in India and the largest in Kerala, is gasping for breath. The 96.5 km-long water body spans the districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Ernakulam and forms part of the Vembanad-Kol wetland system, a Ramsar site. Six major rivers drain into the lake, which accounts for around 30% of the State's total surface water resource. Over the past century, the lake has shrunk significantly due to human-induced interventions, land reclamation, and natural sedimentation, according to experts. Though vital to the region's ecology and agriculture, it faces severe threats from pollution, eutrophication, unsustainable agricultural practices, and invasive weed proliferation.

A few years ago, a study by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies revealed alarming levels of plastic waste, silt, and other sediments in the lake. According to a recent expert committee report prepared as part of the Vembanad Lake Rejuvenation Project, an ambitious joint effort of the Alappuzha district administration and the Local Self Government Department, the lake's surface area has shrunk mainly due to land encroachment. Citing previous studies, the report notes that the surface area of the lake diminished by 27% between 1917 and 1990. The drastic reduction in not only area, but also depth, has significantly reduced the lake's floodwater retention capacity and impaired its critical ecosystem services, including water purification, biodiversity support, and sediment transport. The unchecked proliferation of water hyacinths has further worsened the situation, contributing to dangerously high levels of chemical oxygen demand and biological oxygen demand. As a result, the fish catch has declined by about 66% over the last three

and in what form. As Sashi, accompanied by other researchers, travelled to places such as Channarayana Durga, Yelladakere, Chikkanayakanahalli and Gattipura, and talked to the people who inhabited them, they became deeply intrigued by one of the occupations described by Buchanan: iron-smelting. In South India, where iron has been smelted since at least 2000 BCE, going by artefacts at very early iron age sites, they couldn't help but wonder why the traditional craft of smelting has largely disappeared, says Sashi, who worked with Mahadev Nayak, Amalendu Jyotishi and GJ Lingaraj on this project. "We met people who told us that smelting would happen even in the 1930s and 40s; they remember their grandfathers doing it," he says, adding that, in India, there is usually a certain continuity of tradition, with things rarely disappearing completely. "So I started looking for answers to why and when iron smelting disappears from this region," says Sashi, who was involved in this research till 2010 and has published it in several academic journals, including *Environment and History* and *Economic and Political Weekly*.

To make his research more accessible and to document his own journey, in 2022, he thought of putting it together into a graphic novel, which eventually became *A Journey into the Furnace of History*, beautifully illustrated by the Kolkata-based illustrator and a graphic novelist himself, Harsho Mohan Chatteraj. "I got in touch with a friend in Kolkata who introduced me to Harsho, a renowned artist in this space," he says. They worked together, with Sashi sending him old pictures, and Harsho slowly creating them, panel by panel, he recalls. "I wrote the whole script, having an idea of what it needed to be, panel by panel. I could visualise the novel because I come from a documentary space," he says of the 210-panel-long novel, which took about two years to create and was officially released in 2024. *A Journey into the Furnace of History* not only captures Sashi's journey through the region but also offers insights into Buchanan's thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and examines the craft, tradition and legacy of iron-smelting. Starting with a description of an encounter with a blacksmith, Marappa, who takes Sashi and his colleagues to an iron-smelting site a little outside Channarayana Durga, the book touches on other fascinating insights about this tradition, including how Tipu Sultan's ongoing battle with the British upped demand for iron, how tribes like the Asur and Agaria played a massive role in the development of this technology, the origin of the famous Wootz steel or ukuu and the surprising relationship between smelting and deforestation.

"From these findings, a larger narrative of iron smelting evolved," states the book's introduction, pointing out that Indian environmental history has missed the scale and importance of proto-industrial development in South India, viewing medieval economies as agrarian, consisting of self-sufficient villages. And yet, the centrality of a war economy in the feudal period and the need for arms and ammunition were too large to be brushed aside, continues the introduction, which goes on to argue that there is a need to rethink our environmental history by "integrating military and metallurgical history, with elements of anthropology, economics and sociology." Since iron smelting requires larger amounts of wood to make charcoal, the fuel for the activity, it leads to excessive deforestation, says Sashi, who believes that while many environmental historians attribute the destruction of forests in India to a colonial enterprise, connected to the advent of railways, the reality is a bit more complicated. "Typically, environmental history is not connected to iron and steel, but imagine armies of 50-100,000, carrying a sword, shield...elephants with armour... canons," he says, pointing out that even making a small cannon would require 1000-1500 tonnes of wood to make. In Sashi's opinion, there is a desperate need to connect the environment, the military, the social and the political history of the nation, and to reach a larger audience, which the graphic novel attempts to do. "We can write technical or academic papers and get them published, but how many people are interested in reading them?" he asks.

decades.

The efforts to rejuvenate the lake are being spearheaded by Alappuzha District Collector Alex Varghese. The initiative draws "inspiration from the Namami Gange Programme". It gained momentum on October 28, 2024 when a workshop was held focusing on addressing the challenges of restoring the water body. Eight subcommittees — agriculture, fisheries, water resources, tourism, biodiversity, environment and sanitation, disaster management and climate change, and revenue — were constituted. A ₹188.25 crore comprehensive five-year plan was formulated and recently submitted to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The estimate may be revised based on the detailed study on water resources and irrigation projects being conducted by the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management.

The short-term goals include the removal of plastic waste, construction of bio-shields to protect farmlands, fish ranching, weed eradication, and the construction of 31 bio bunds, each 1 km long in 31 grama panchayats. The long-term targets include dredging the lake bed to increase its water-holding capacity, promoting organic farming to prevent pollution from pesticides and chemicals, conserving the flora and fauna, establishing sewage and faecal sludge treatment plants in flood-prone Kuttanad, manufacturing value-added products from water hyacinth, and boosting tourism and fish yield. While the report is under the State government's consideration, 28.72 tonnes of plastic waste and a greater quantity of water hyacinth were removed from the lake in recent mega cleaning drives conducted under the aegis of the Alappuzha district administration. Rejuvenating the lake is critical for enhancing the region's resilience to climate change impacts such as erratic rainfall, sea-level rise, and intensified flooding events. However, it is easier said than done.

For instance, houseboats are among the top sources of pollution in the lake. While the report calls for enacting strict laws against unauthorised vessels, previous efforts to rein in illegal houseboat operations have been largely ineffective. Another significant hurdle is land encroachment. The expert committee report notes that reclaiming encroached areas “necessitates strong political support and decisive action.”

How a return to domestic grind fuelled Ishan Kishan’s comeback



Ishan Kishan doesn't pause for a second when asked about the phase when he was dropped from the India team, told to go back to the domestic circuit and fight his way up again. "Mujhe mazaa aagaya (I enjoyed it)," he says. The two years that he spent out of the national set-up has ensured India has got to see the best version of Ishan, one who is not just adventurous and daring, but also responsible. Having missed out on a big score in the two previous matches of the Duleep Trophy, the East Zone made up for it with 270 against South Zone in the final at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Monday. The attack didn't test him much, the pitch was on the flatter side, and Ishan ensured he got the job done. Having made a comeback into India's white-ball set-up, Ishan felt it was the domestic grind that helped him evolve as a batsman. "I genuinely enjoyed it," Ishan said about his time with Jharkhand. "I went back, had to grind and work hard for about two years. But sometimes, when we play regularly for India, you just keep playing in a flow. You might be a very good player which is why you're playing for India, but

your growth stagnates at a certain point," the 28-year-old said. "So when you take a step back and return to domestic cricket, you start from zero again. You start thinking, 'I need to get even better,' because today, there are so many players scoring runs. To get back into the team, your only option is to perform much better than them." The wicketkeeper said that more than technique, it is the mindset tweak that has helped him. "You get time to reflect on what you missed earlier, why you couldn't convert your starts into big scores. The batting doesn't change that much; it's just the mindset that changes over time. When you process these things and keep working hard, and then make a comeback, you rarely think about things like 'I will smash this, I will hit him like that.' You stay in the moment, taking it one over at a time, or one ball at a time. You remain relaxed and just play," Ishan added. From the time Ishan walked into the middle, the South Zone attack tried different ways to frustrate him. First up, they laid a short-ball trap and bowled with a heavy leg-side field and on Monday, when Tripurana Vijay bowled, there were just two fielders on the off-side. But Ishan didn't try to manufacture strokes. He was prepared to grind it out. "I was extremely focused because I couldn't afford to gift them my wicket. When they are trying tactics because the pitch isn't offering much, trying to bait me into doing something rash, that is when I refuse to make mistakes. The longer we drag them out and tire them, the easier it will be for us to score runs later on," he said. With 708 runs on the board, East Zone are firmly in control of the final. With the red soil pitch starting to take turn, South Zone have an uphill task to come anywhere close to a first innings lead. "We batted for two days. We know this is essentially a one-innings game. So our primary task is to take the first 10 wickets," he said.

Alastair Cook on Pietersen-McCullum pairing: ‘They are mavericks’

Cook, who played alongside Pietersen for England, felt the appointment represented something of a shift in McCullum's approach, with England gradually adding more experienced voices to the backroom staff. Cook, who played alongside Pietersen for England, felt the appointment represented something of a shift in McCullum's approach, with England gradually adding more experienced voices to the backroom staff.

Former England captain Alastair Cook believed Kevin Pietersen's return to the national set-up could provide England's white-ball side with fresh ideas and "stardust", but warned that managing the strong personalities of Pietersen and head coach Brendon McCullum could become crucial if the pair differ over the team's direction. Pietersen was appointed specialist mentor of England's white-ball sides on Monday in the build-up to next year's ODI World Cup in South Africa, returning to the national set-up more than a decade after his international career ended. Cook, who played alongside Pietersen for England, felt the appointment represented something of a shift in McCullum's approach, with England gradually adding more experienced voices to the backroom staff.

"I suppose we're going full circle a little bit with the coaching staff now. Brendon McCullum, when he first came in, got rid of everyone and just wanted two or three people around. And now they seem to be adding a bit more experience. He will have a lot of experience," Cook said on the Stick to Cricket podcast. Cook believed Pietersen's unconventional thinking could make him a valuable sounding board for England's players, but acknowledged that his strong personality adds an unpredictable element to the set-up. "If KP sees something he doesn't like, he will say it," Cook said. "They (McCullum and Pietersen) are mavericks. So they will have different opinions on certain things. Managing that relationship—McCullum, who is actually a very good people's person, so it might not be an issue—but if they start, if they start having different ideas, that could leave Harry (Brook) in the middle. This is like the worst-case scenario. The best-case scenario, you've got a bloke who's extremely talented, thinks probably differently because those guys do. Adding that experience



rience into the mix of players, stardust as well, and players like being surrounded by people with stardust, and that could, that could just generate some more things. "The worst-case scenario, as we all know, goes like that and they clash heads. That's the worst case." Michael Vaughan also backed the move, pointing to Pietersen's work ethic during his playing days and England's willingness to bring back someone who has publicly criticised the team's preparation in the recent past.

"They've been willing to appoint someone that's had a pop at them not too long ago, which I like. I like the fact that Rob Key has gone, 'You know what? He'll help the England team.' And some of the things he said was about preparation and practice. He had a right good go at them in India for not practising hard enough in the white-ball series," Vaughan said. "He's had a pop at them before the Ashes last year about preparation. So maybe he'll be the one. There wasn't—Alastair was right up there with the hardest workers as well—but there was no one that worked harder in my time as an England cricketer than Kevin Pietersen. So he'll definitely bring that drive to the England scene." Vaughan also described Pietersen as "an absolute diamond" during the early years of his England career. I always say, in my time, that I got Kev from 2004 to 2008; honestly, I thought he was a diamond. An absolute diamond." "Honestly, I couldn't have asked for a better person in the team. You told him to do something, he'd do it. Always trained hard, he was always on time, very disciplined.

Selector Bailey defends including Labuschagne in Australia squad for South Africa tour



Australia batter Marnus Labuschagne has come under a lot of flak for his ordinary performances in Tests, most recently in the series against Bangladesh where he scored just 36 across 3 innings in the two matches. With the batter getting selected in the squad for the crucial 3 Tests against South Africa, set to begin on October 9, Australia selector George Bailey said that Labuschagne can still make a positive impact even though there was no guarantee that he'll be in the playing XI for the 1st Test. "We are not shying away from the fact that we'd like some more runs from Marnus. That's clear, but we're also confident that he can still make a positive contribution to that squad. I think our batting group in its entirety, not just Marnus, probably hasn't been functioning as successfully as we would like, but also not shying away from the fact that we've continued to win a lot of Test matches over that period. And that ultimately, I think that's the key, isn't it? Scoring more runs than the opposition that you're playing the game in," Bailey said on Monday.

"I think Marn (Labuschagne) will continue to prepare and refine how he will prepare for this series. Clearly there's potentially a simplification or an ability to focus purely on red-ball cricket for him in the fact that he won't be in the one day series leading up to it. So that may be a benefit. He'll prepare incredibly well and specifically for this tour. And as I said, in that squad of 16, I'm confident that he can still make a positive contribution," he

added. Labuschagne has been ordinary for Australia in recent times with his last century in the Baggy Green coming in July 2023. Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting and former opener Mathew Hayden have criticized Labuschagne for his performances, indicating that the Aussies should move on from the player. Labuschagne was widely seen as a second Steve Smith due to his eccentric mannerisms while batting and his extraordinary form between 2019 and 2022. Since then, however, Labuschagne's graph has been on a downturn. He hasn't been able to score a century since his last one during the 2023 Ashes and has scored 121 runs this year in five innings.

CAG script 5-4 comeback win over SAI

Hyderabad: The Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) survived a scare as it came back from 1-4 down to script a 5-4 win over the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in the sixth Hockey India Senior Men Inter-Department National Championship 2026 at the Gachibowli Hockey Stadium here on Monday. In another match, Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) scored an 8-1 win over Central Secretariat, while Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) hammered Defence Accounts Sports Control Board (DASCB) 10-0.

Results:
PSPB 8 (Gurjot Singh 2, Ravneet Singh, Devindar Walmiki, Manpreet, Sudeep Chirmako 2, Varun Kumar) bt Central Secretariat 1 (Chandan Singh). Sashastra Seema Bal 2 (Bikash Kujur, Vishal Yadav) lost to ITBP Central Hockey Team 4 (Rahul Yadav, Rohit 2, Roshan). CAG 5 (Parmod 2, Manjeet 2, H Thrishul Ganapathi) bt SAI 4 (Sunil 2, Sunil Jojo, Sunit Lakra). CRPF 10 (Abhishek 2, Gurmehakdeep Singh 2, Lovejeet Singh, Lovepreet Singh, Mohd Wasiullah Khan 2, Deepak, Harish Pal) bt DASCB 0. SSCB 3

World Archery Para Series: India secure multiple finals and assure medals in Ahmedabad



Ahmedabad: India sealed multiple finals assuring a string of medals across recurve, compound and W1 events to enjoy a productive outing on the third day of the World Archery Para Series (Stage III) here on Monday. In the visually impaired 1 category, Tanvi Pravin Ingale settled for a silver medal after losing 4-6 to Cyprus' Christos Misos in the final. Yugal Garg defeated compatriot Pawan Kumar to win a bronze medal in the category.

Harvinder Singh and Vijay Sundi defeated China's Xia Lei and Zhu Wenjian 5-1 to enter the final of the para recurve men's team event and confirm another medal for India. The Indian duo will face third-seeded Slovakia in the gold medal clash. India also booked a place in the final of the para recurve women's team event after Bhawna and Pooja defeated their Iranian counterparts 6-2. They will face China in the gold medal match.

India confirmed a third medal in the recurve mixed team event when Harvinder and Bhawna defeated Indonesia's pairing 6-0 in straight sets to book their place in the final. The Indian duo will face China in the gold medal clash. The compound men's team of Shyam Sunder Swami and Toman Kumar also assured India another medal by advancing to the final. Swami and Toman beat China's Bao Yirui and Feng Yue 154-153 and will face seventh-seeded Iraq in the gold medal match. The compound women's team of Sheetal Devi and Payal Nag narrowly missed out on a place in the final after losing to Kazakhstan 151-152. They will now face China in the

bronze medal match. India also lost a closely fought compound mixed team shoot-off against China after the two sides were locked at 156-156. The shoot-off was tied 20-20, with China advancing after winning on the basis of the arrow being closer to the centre. In the W1 mixed team (recurve/compound) event, Swati Chaudhary and Adil Mohamed Nazir Ansari got the better of China's Jin Huan and Yang Xupeng 6-2 to enter the final and confirm another medal for India. The Indian pair will face China in the gold medal clash. In the W1 men's team event, India finished third among the three competing teams. China and Czechia will fight for the gold medal. Earlier in the day the reigning world champion Sheetal Devi confirmed a medal for India by storming into the women's compound individual final. In an all-Indian semifinal, the armless archer from Jammu defeated Sarita 145-143 to book her place in the gold medal clash, where she will face Aizada Seidan of Kazakhstan. Sarita will also have another opportunity to add to India's medal tally when she will take on Wang Huiting of China in the bronze medal match. The women's compound event thus gave India one confirmed medal and another still in the hunt, with world number one Sheetal eyeing the top podium finish.

In the compound men's section, reigning world champion and world number one Toman Kumar lost to top seed Ken Swagumilang of Indonesia 146-144 in the semifinal and will fight for the bronze medal against Abbas Kahdim of Iraq. Earlier, Swagumilang ended the campaign of Gurwinder Singh in the quarterfinals, with the Indian losing 141-143. India's campaign ended in the W1 men's section after fifth seed Adil Mohamed Nazir Ansari and ninth seed Nurudin lost their respective quarterfinal matches. Adil lost to Czechia's multiple Paralympics medalist David Drahoninsky 5-6 (8-10) in the shoot-off, while Nurudin went down 2-6 to top seed Yang Xupeng of China. The women, on the other hand, kept India's hopes alive in the W1 women's section, with second-seeded Indian Swati Chaudhary set to fight for the bronze medal. Athletes classified as W1 usually have an impairment in the top and bottom halves of their bodies, torso and at least three limbs and some W1 athletes have an assistant to help them load the bow.

Karun Nair takes dig at exclusion from South Zone playing XI in Duleep final

Karun Nair, who was not selected in the South Zone playing XI for the Duleep Trophy final against East Zone, on Monday directed a dig at the selection process. Nair had scored 699 runs in last season's Ranji Trophy and him missing the Duleep final raised a fair few eyebrows. After his non-selection, Nair had left the team with South Zone coach Vikram Verma saying that the batter had departed for personal reasons. However, Nair was seen in action on Monday for the KSCA Secretary XI at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in the Thimmapiah Trophy where he slammed 104 runs.

On Tuesday, Nair quote tweeted a post which said that he was inexplicably left out of the Duleep Trophy final, tweeting out, "Inexplicable would be an understatement" with a laughing emoji. In the Duleep Trophy final, Ishan Kishan made a stupendous 270 to lead East to a mammoth 700-plus first innings total. In fact, South ignored the Karnataka batter rather inexplicably in the semifinal also, which was played last week at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru. "Actually, we went with a good combination because every team has two left-hand spinners. So, we thought a left-hand batter in the middle order would give us a good chance to dominate them," said coach Verma. "So again, we thought about what is best for the team. Now since Devdutt Padikkal has come back, the team combination matter was there. It is very difficult to miss him (Karun) out, but that's the combination we have." Verma attributed Karun's absence to "personal reasons." "He went back due to personal reasons at home. He mailed us and took the permission for his travel due to



family reasons," he said. But Karun's participation in a tournament in his home city, however, indicated that him non-playing the domestic season opener has more to it than mere "personal reasons." The 34-year-old's hundred ensured that Secretary's XI finished day 1 of the match against Chhattisgarh at 277 for 9 in 90 overs. It may also tell that South Zone missed a trick by overlooking Karun, after conceding 708 runs against East Zone in the Duleep Trophy title clash on a placid pitch. The Karnataka batter, a dominant player against spin, would have loved to take on twerkers at the Chidambaram Stadium. However, Verma thought South Zone are still in the contest. "Our plan is to play session by session and build partnerships so that we bat 5 sessions from now, so that we can chase it (East's total of 708) down," he said.

Jelena Ostapenko rages at opponent’s box before US Open win



A year after Jelena Ostapenko had lashed out at Taylor Townsend for having "no class" and "no education", the Latvian lost her cool again at the US Open. This time, it was the coach of the rival team who she confronted mid-match before securing a spot in the women's doubles quarter-finals with Taiwanese partner Hsieh Su-wei at the US Open. Ostapenko was livid at the coach of Australian-Taiwanese pair Maya Joint and Chan Hao-ching, ap-

proaching the chair umpire during a changeover and then gesticulating toward the ?coach, urging the official to ?intervene.

The Latvian claimed that the coach had been sarcastically praising their shots in Chinese while also clapping and shouting after their mistakes. Since Ostapenko doesn't speak the language, Hsieh translated for her. "They do this because they know they cannot beat us," Ostapenko told the umpire, calling the behaviour "very disrespectful". Ostapenko, the ?2017 French Open singles champion, also demanded that a Chinese ?translator be present. She and her partner Su-wei channelled their anger at the coach into defeating the opponents 6-4, 6-4. Ostapenko celebrated the win by roaring ?at the opposing box while Hsieh and Chan did not shake hands at the ?end of ?the fiery ?encounter. This is not the first time that Ostapenko has found herself in an argument in the middle of a match. It was at ?last year's US Open, where she had caused a stir by an explosive rant against Townsend, stating that the American tennis player had "no class" and "no education". Ostapenko later had to apologise, saying ?her ?choice of words during the exchange had been misunderstood because English was not ?her first language.

Big Bash League opened to private investors; \$1 billion windfall expected

Cricket Australia (CA) threw open the doors of Big Bash League franchises to private investors in a move that is expected to lead to a windfall of \$1 billion, according to media reports in Australia. This opens a new avenue for owners of Indian Premier League franchises to invest in the Big Bash and Women's Big Bash. Significantly, when CA made the announcement in a press conference the presence of top cricketers alongside CA hierarchy was the most notable part. Sitting besides CA CEO Todd Greenberg and chair Mike Baird at the press conference were Australian captains Pat Cummins, Sophie Molineux and stars such as Travis Head and Ellyse Perry. Their

presence was symbolic, because the Australian Cricketers' Association is yet to formally approve the initiative.

"Privatisation, if done well, can be a great thing for the sport," Cummins was quoted as saying by Australia's 7News. "So many benefits for obviously the Big Bash League, but as an Aussie captain as well, Test cricket's so important for me, and I think this sets us up really well for the future." "This can unlock some new areas that we can go into in the Women's Big Bash. New investors, new opportunities to be able to innovate and grow the game.

Nora Fatehi called our plane a ‘toy’, hurt reputation: Aviation company files Rs 3 cr suit



Actor-singer Nora Fatehi has landed in fresh trouble after an aviation company sued her for allegedly making “derogatory and reckless” comments against it on social media. The company, Dunes Aviation, has reportedly filed a Rs 3-crore civil defamation suit at a court in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, alleging that she posted a video on social media calling one of its chartered aircraft a “lego airplane,” which purportedly damaged its reputation.

Why aviation company sued Nora Fatehi for Rs 3 crThe incident in question happened in December last year on board a Cessna Citation CJ2 aircraft from Mumbai to Jaipur, news agency PTI reported. The aviation company claimed that the actor recorded videos inside the

aircraft, describing it as a “miniature,” a “toy,” and a “lego airplane.” She subsequently posted the clips on Instagram.Must Read | Mirzapur The Movie box office day 4: Pankaj Tripathi film passes Monday test, earns Rs 154 crDescribing Nora Fatehi’s comments as “reckless, irresponsible, and made without any technical knowledge, verification or factual basis,” Dunes Aviation alleged that her actions triggered cancellations and severely hurt the company’s commercial operations.Impact of Nora Fatehi’s ‘lego airplane’ commentIt said that her remarks caused “serious reputational damage, loss of goodwill and adverse commercial impact” to the firm, resulting in a purported 15-20 per cent drop in bookings and a rise in cancellations.Dunes Aviation asserted that the aircraft is fully DGCA-certified, airworthy, and lawfully operated under a valid Non-Scheduled Operator’s Permit (NSOP). In addition to Rs 3 crore in damages, the company has also demanded the removal of all content related to the incident from social media.Born in Canada, Nora Fatehi began her acting career with a small role in Roar: Tigers of the Sundarbans (2014). She has since appeared in movies such as Temper, Double Barrel, Baahubali: The Beginning, Kick 2, Oopiri, Satyameva Jayate, Stree, and Thamma, predominantly in song sequences.She has played key roles in movies such as My Birthday Song, Bharat, Street Dancer 3D, Madgaon Express, Matka, and KD: The Devil. She has also appeared in a handful of television shows and web series and has sung several songs.

How Mammootty stole the screen from Rajinikanth with subtlety, quiet authority in Thalapathi



When Surya resists his demand to murder Arjun, Devaraj talks to him with the same inscrutable face — which the former had seen only once before, during their first meeting, when they were still foes — and accuses him of being lenient towards the collector, which he assumes is because Arjun is married to Subbulakshmi. As Surya shouts at him for questioning the honesty of his friendship, Devaraj looks at him with dead eyes.

It is almost impossible for anyone to match Rajinikanth’s charisma on screen, especially since the 1990s, when he became the sole nucleus of his movies. In Thalapathi (1991), director Mani Ratnam also brings out the exceptional actor in him. So, it’s a double whammy for his co-actors. Yet, Mammootty holds his own against Rajinikanth at every turn, delivering a phenomenal portrayal.

Devaraj might not rank among Mammootty’s greatest performances of all time, simply because he has delivered even better ones. However, it’s impossible to ignore the fact that, despite having ‘Aura’kanth (a popular internet portmanteau of aura and Rajinikanth) in his element right next to him, Mammootty sets the screen ablaze with his precise, understated, and subtle performance, further elevated by a raspy voice modulation, slightly reminiscent of Marlon Brando’s in The Godfather (1972) and Amitabh Bachchan’s in Agneepath (1990).The way Mammootty channels his character’s emotions, cleverly choosing his moments to go from explicit to minimalist, underscores his mastery of the craft.

Surya as the key to Devaraj’s humanityIn his initial scenes in Thalapathi, Devaraj (Mammootty) wears an eerily guarded demeanour. He’s inscrutable, if not for the content of the words he speaks. His low-register delivery only adds to his sinisteress, giving the feeling that everyone and everything around him falls silent the moment he starts talking. The first time we see him truly smile is when he’s in front of his wife, Selvi (Geetha), introducing her to his new best friend, Surya (Rajinikanth).From that moment on, whenever Devaraj is with Surya or talking for his best friend — like the scene where they go to Subbulakshmi’s (Shobana) house to meet her father (Charuhasan) and request that he marry her off to Surya — he becomes expressive. Whenever he is with Surya, Devaraj shows his happiness, sadness, anger, regret, and remorse in an unfiltered manner. It’s as if he isn’t scared to be expressive in front of his best friend, like he is in front of his wife. It’s as if Surya brings out the human in Devaraj.

Thalapathi is directed by Mani Ratnam. Thalapathi is a retelling of Karna’s story from the Mahabharata, with a special focus on his camaraderie with Duryodhana. (Credit: IMDb)But there is one more scene when that eerily guarded demeanour fills Devaraj’s face yet again. Towards the end, when Surya tells him not to make harsh decisions and to roll back his order to kill Collector Arjun (Arvind Swamy), we see Devaraj’s sinisteress once again. That moment makes one feel that when the police emotionally and physically thrashed him in the preceding scenes, they unknowingly unleashed the monster chained within Devaraj.When Surya resists his demand to murder Arjun, Devaraj talks to him with the same inscrutable face — which the former had seen only once before, during their first meeting, when they were still foes — and accuses him of being lenient towards the collector, which he assumes is because Arjun is married to Subbulakshmi. As Surya shouts at him for questioning the honesty of his friendship, Devaraj looks at him with dead eyes.Here, Rajinikanth gets the explosive lines and the space to go loud with his performance. But Mammootty matches it with just his commanding and riveting glance, along with a few terse dialogues.

A quiet assertion of authority: The ‘Mudiyaath’ momentOn paper, Devaraj is formidable, authoritative, and

punchy, but he doesn’t have as much aura or swagger as Surya. But it’s there on screen. That’s, to a great extent, Mammootty’s contribution. The actor’s brilliance is that he doesn’t reduce the character to monotony. He explores its length and breadth well, which is why Thalapathi is remembered for his portrayal as well.The best way to understand the depth and sharpness of his depiction is an analysis of the way he sends chills down everyone’s spine and asserts his authority with a simple “Mudiyaath (No)” to Collector Arjun during a meeting, which the latter convened to direct Devaraj and Surya to stop their gangster activities.A retelling of Karna’s story from the Hindu epic Mahabharata, with a special focus on his camaraderie with Duryodhana, Thalapathi argues that villainy is subjective and depends on the perspective from which one views a person, a situation or an action.From Surya’s (Karna) point of view, his mother Kalyani (Kunti), played by Srividya, is in the wrong for abandoning him as a newborn; however, from her perspective, she had no other option as she was a minor.

Surya and Devaraj (Duryodhana) believe they are serving the people, even if that means taking the law into their own hands. In contrast, Arjun (Arjuna) sees them as criminals. Surya and Devaraj argue that this is because Arjun, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, does not understand the helplessness of unprivileged people and how the system ignores their suffering. However, as a righteous bureaucrat, Arjun believes that anyone who commits a crime is a criminal.Despite being in love with Surya, Subbulakshmi (Draupadi) eventually marries Arjun. Surya believes this is because of his social status and the fact that he is an orphan and an outlaw, but she is powerless against her father’s wishes.Given the movie’s emphasis on relativism, the performances needed to be layered and multifaceted. Mammootty’s depiction of Devaraj/ Duryodhana — portrayed here almost like a misunderstood king — is arguably the most attuned to the intricacies of Thalapathi’s narrative.The beauty of the unsaid

The movie features several moments when Mammootty subtly yet magnificently adds weight and detail to the character through his gestures. For instance, there’s a scene where Devaraj introduces Surya to the newborn daughter of Ramana, a man Surya killed recently. Realising who she is, Surya stands there numb, staring at the little one’s mother, Padma (Bhanupriya), with guilt.Meanwhile, Devaraj tells the child she can ask Surya anything and that he will always be there for her. As the child starts crying, Devaraj takes her back from Surya’s hands and heads towards Padma, before subtly looking at Surya to read his face. This glance not only establishes Devaraj’s compassion towards Surya and his plan for the child’s future, but also reiterates that he’s the absolute kingmaker, deciding everyone’s fate.Thalapathi features several moments when Mammootty subtly yet magnificently adds weight and detail to his character. Mammootty and Rajinikanth in director Mani Ratnam’s Thalapathi. But it’s not just such nuanced portrayals that Mammootty excels at; he also delivers the expressive moments brilliantly well. Be it the scene when Devaraj comes to meet Surya at his home — after learning that Surya refused to jump ship to the rival side despite a lucrative offer — and tears up like an abandoned little boy who has just felt the warmth of a loving hug for the first time, or the scene when he angrily pleads with Charuhasan’s character to marry Subbulakshmi to Surya, or the one towards the end when he realises that Surya still chose to stand by his side despite learning that Arjun is his brother, Mammootty masterfully adds significant depth to Devaraj.

The Mammootty-Rajinikanth chemistryThe impeccable on-screen chemistry Mammootty shares with Rajinikanth, most evident in the meeting scene at the Collector’s residence, where they communicate through silences and between the lines — as though they are one body and one soul — also contributes to Thalapathi’s brilliance.And who can forget them dancing together like two cute little boys in the iconic “Kaattukuyilu” song, composed by the maestro Ilaiyaraaja?While Mani Ratnam has managed to flesh out most characters in Thalapathi well — something missing in many of his earlier scripts — the way Devaraj’s character arc is crafted, even with Surya himself having a proper one, deserves extra commendation.The first time we see Devaraj, he is ruthless and will do anything to ensure that people fear him. But towards the end, he becomes the human he dreamt of after becoming friends with Surya. When Surya admits that Arjun is his brother and Kalyani is their mother, Devaraj tears up and pleads with Surya to share his family with him, underscoring how lonely he had been till then.At 75, Mammootty still amazes us with his phenomenal performances,

Mohanlal masterfully played MGR in Iruvar, then went on to look like his photocopy in a dud



Okay then, leave it. Which is the greatest Mohanlal character/performance of all time? Sethumadhavan (Kireedam)? Sathyanathan (Sadayam)? Kunjikuttan (Vanaprastham)? Kalloor Gopinathan (Bharatham)? Ramesan Nair (Thammathra)? Dr PK Haridas (Amrutham Gamaya)?I know; these questions are both extremely difficult and hackneyed, just like asking, “Who is the better actor: Mohanlal or Mammootty?” As challenging as these questions are, it’s also pointless to answer them, as it would only diminish the undeniable glory of the others.

But even if it’s impossible to pick the best Mohanlal film or his best performance, there’s no doubt that director Mani Ratnam’s Iruvar (1997) and the acting legend’s portrayal of Anandan in it rank among his finest. From the character’s body language and gestures to his voice modulation and dialogue delivery, Mohanlal gives Anandan an astounding uniqueness, elevating the movie’s overall brilliance. The movie also shows Anandan at different points in his life, and Mohanlal depicts his character’s evolution exceptionally well, with remarkable finesse.Although not a biopic per se, Iruvar was inspired by the lives of former Tamil Nadu chief ministers MG Ramachandran and M Karunanidhi and their frenemy relationship, with Anandan being a fictional version of MGR. Hence, Mohanlal also added some of MGR’s gestures and physical mannerisms, such as his brisk walk and hand movements, to Anandan. So, in a way, it can be said that Mohanlal did a phenomenal job portraying MGR on screen.

However, about seven years later, the acting legend almost tarnished the legacy of his iconic portrayal by playing an MGR fan, which is one of his worst performances of all time. In fact, the movie Vamanapuram Bus Route (2004) can undoubtedly be described as one of the worst Malayalam films of the 2000s.The movie is so crass that it gives the impression that all the makers wanted to do was create about two hours’ worth of visuals, somehow stitch them together, and dump them onto theatre screens, certain that at least some people would turn up to see Mohanlal’s face, no matter what.And un/surprisingly, this plan somehow worked as Vamanapuram Bus Route, according to The Hindu, ran for over three weeks in 36 centres in Kerala and did good business outside the state as well. This is despite it being one of those films that even trolls can’t sit through, because it doesn’t even have any meme-worthy momentsDirected by Sonu Sisupal and penned by Sudheesh-John, the movie revolves around “Lever” Johnny (Mohanlal), a bus employee who arrives in Vamanapuram at the panchayat president’s (Jagathy Sreekumar) request to help bring a bus route to the village, which the opposition party has been blocking. Known for solving problems with his physical and mental strength, Johnny gradually helps the ruling party achieve its goals. Meanwhile, he falls in love with the president’s daughter Meenakshi (Lakshmi Gopalswamy), paving the way for fresh conflicts in Vamanapuram.Unlike the nuanced manner in which he channelled MGR into himself and onto the screen, Mohanlal goes all in on Vamanapuram Bus Route. While it’s understandable that he is not portraying MGR himself but someone inspired by the persona be-

hind the man, Mohanlal’s performance lacks genuine-ness from the start.

The misfire: Mimicking MGR without nuanceJohnny is introduced in a Tamil song, “Ezhai Paravakale,” reminiscent of the makkal paasam tracks often seen in MGR movies. From his body language and the way he hops around to his dressing style — with a scarf around his neck and theatrical makeup — Johnny mimics MGR in every way.However, rather than making Johnny look like a photocopy of MGR or even an amateurish painting of the icon, Mohanlal ends up making Johnny seem like MGR’s Aadhaar card photo, which even the latter would have hated.From jokes that would make one yawn and drama that would make one laugh to a story and setup inspired by cinema auteur KG George’s classic political satire Panchavadi Palam (1984) — although it’s grossly unfair to put the names of both movies in the same sentence, even if only to assert the contrast — the Sonu Sisupal directorial is an atrocity to all the senses.

Remember when Marlon Brando parodied his role as Vito Corleone from director Francis Ford Coppola’s The Godfather (1972) in Andrew Bergman’s The Freshman (1990)? Carmine Sabatini, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Corleone, worked well because both the creators and Brando knew they were parodying his iconic character.Maybe if Vamanapuram Bus Route had been treated in a similar manner, or at least if Mohanlal had crafted his performance that way, it could have been a delightful addition to his repertoire.But I guess that’s just a film critic overreading things as usual, trying to find unnecessarily new meanings in works that actually don’t have any meaning to begin with. This so-called comedy-drama doesn’t even have comedy or drama in it, so how could it subvert anything?Vamanapuram Bus Route also features some of Malayalam cinema’s finest character actors, such as Oduvil Unnikrishnan, Jagadish, Jagathy Sreekumar, Janardhanan, and Rajan P Dev. Yet, much like Mohanlal, the film wastes them in abysmally written characters, leading to uninspired performances.Only in SCREEN | Toxic: Yash, Geetu Mohandas’ crime thriller becomes the very monster it set out to destroyYet, the biggest atrocity the movie committed was wasting composer MS Viswanathan’s iconic romantic track “Raajaavin Paarvi” from Anbe Vaa (1966), featuring MGR and B Saroja Devi, by recreating it in this cinematic abomination.Every time I hear the original “Raajaavin Paarvi,” images of Mohanlal and Lakshmi Gopalswamy from Vamanapuram Bus Route rush to my mind and overlap with the original, which I have to fight against every time so the song doesn’t ruin itself for me.

If you thought Sonu Sisupal’s direction was bad, listen to “Enniyenni Chakkakkuru,” which he himself composed; it’s even worse. The only way I can believe that the song was penned by legendary lyricist Gireesh Puthenchery is by gaslighting myself into thinking that Gireesh had entered into a bet to write the worst lines he could possibly come up with.ICYMI | Dear filmmakers, stop turning Mohanlal, other superstars into a joke with forced cameos

Vamanapuram Bus Route > Vaa VaathiyaarConsidering that Sonu Sisupal’s previous directorial venture was the so-bad-it’s-good Kalachakram (2002), Vamanapuram Bus Route could be dubbed an upgrade. And I would still rank it above director Nalan Kumarasamy’s Karthi-starrer Vaa Vaathiyaar (2026), another movie featuring an MGR-inspired character at its centre.But that’s only because Nalan has significantly more potential, and it’s infuriating to see him make something like that. For Sonu Sisupal, Vamanapuram Bus Route is the best movie he has directed to date, among all three of them.Oh, by the way, you think Vamanapuram Bus Route is the worst? Have you heard of the time Mammootty mastered the art of creating masks of people’s faces? Apparently, as soon as someone wears one of these masks, their height and body shape also change to match the person they’re pretending to be. Or so the movie likes to believe.But the funny part is, this isn’t a sci-fi film. It’s just a drama-thriller, and the creators apparently thought this plot device made total sense. If you want to know more about this movie, come back next Monday to read

‘Can’t accept Ranbir Kapoor as Rama in Ramayana’: Ramanand Sagar’s grandson praises Yash



With just two months until the worldwide release of director Nitesh Tiwari’s epic mythological action-adventure film Ramayana: Part 1, fans are eagerly monitoring the latest developments and awaiting more promotional material offering further sneak peeks into the movie.Although the film’s trailer, unveiled in late July, was well received, a section of the audience remains sceptical about whether the makers will do justice to Ramayana, particularly given that the last movie adaptation of the Hindu epic was the critical and commercial bomb Adipurush (2023).

Must Read | After splitting with Badshah, Isha Rikhi rules out Bigg Boss 20 romance: ‘Will tie rakhi’While Ranbir Kapoor’s appearance as Rama in the trailer was met with widespread acclaim, it seems that the grandson

of legendary filmmaker Ramanand Sagar, who scripted and directed the television serial adaptation of Ramayana, isn’t fully impressed with his casting. He recently said it is hard for him to accept the actor as Rama because of his past roles, particularly the one in director Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s Animal (2023).

Why Shiv Sagar is not impressed by Ranbir Kapoor as RamaPointing out that a fresh face would have been better suited for the role, producer-director Shiv Sagar said Ranbir Kapoor “has a lot of baggage.” He told news agency ANI, “Except for that one casting, I like the rest of the casting very much. Personally, I cannot accept Ranbir Kapoor as Rama because... after Animal, I cannot accept him as Rama. When I look at Ram ji, I feel that a fresh face should have been chosen.”

Shiv Sagar added, “You can take a very strong supporting cast, like Yash is looking very good, Sai Pallavi is looking very good; they don’t have that much baggage. He (Ranbir) has a lot of baggage. That’s why we usually take a new face in our serials, so they don’t have any baggage or history.”He clarified, however, that he harbours no personal issues with Ranbir and noted that he is a strong performer. “We have seen Ranbir in different roles; he is a very good actor. Personally, I don’t have anything against him. I think they must have taken him for the project because they want a marketing push, and maybe if they didn’t take Ranbir, the film wouldn’t have been marketed so well. So that’s also something to think about. But I personally believe that for such characters, it’s better to take a new face,” he pointed out.He continued, “Because after Ramayana, will he be accepted again in a film like Animal? Especially when it comes to Ram ji and Ramayana, people are a bit more touchy and emotional, and this is not mythology. In the West, we call it mythology; even in India, it is called mythology. But it is our history. People worship them every day; he (Ram) is our history.”ICYMI | Mirzapur The Movie box office day 4