

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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Perform Or Perish: CM Revanth tells Cong MLAs aspiring for 2nd term

HYDERABAD:, SEPT 10

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has made it clear to Congress MLAs that only the performance of every legislator will determine the success of the party and therefore their own conduct will influence the chances of their winning a second term in the next elections. The Chief Minister instructed all MLAs to attend the ongoing Assembly session and raise local issues in the House.

The Chief Minister presided over the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting here on Thursday, with Ministers, government whips and Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president in tow. He told the legislators that people gave a big mandate in the last elections; so, everyone has to work hard to succeed politically in the future as well. Revanth

Reddy commended the legislators for strongly countering the Opposition's conspiracy and exposing their "plot" against the government to the public.

An inquiry into the incidents that took place has already been initiated. The opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi had "conspired" to disrupt the Assembly session, he reiterated. Even after losing power, BRS leaders had refused to shed their arrogance. The opposition leaders abused police officials and public representatives verbally.

They behaved inappropriately towards officials and caused embarrassment by taking off their T-shirts in the presence of female officers. The use of highly objectionable language to abuse the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly was uncalled for. The

BRS also insulted the Dalit community by "purifying" the ground where Dalits had walked at KCR's farmhouse.

Referring to the Census, the Chief Minister stressed that the Congress should mount pressure on the Centre to adopt the Telangana model and conduct a caste census alongside the general census. "The caste census conducted by Telangana is a role model for the country and it is the achievement of the state," he observed.

The Chief Minister took serious note of the deletion of the votes in the SIR and asked all the legisla-



tors to protect the voting rights of the people. He pointed out that 15 crore adult voter names have gone missing across the country.

Thanking all the MLAs for their cooperation during these 1,000 days of governance, Revanth Reddy said that all the legislators should be present in the House during the debates.

Suspense Over: Chinese President Xi to Visit India for BRICS Summit

Beijing, Sept 11

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit India this week to attend the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, the foreign ministry announced on Thursday. This will be Xi's first visit to India in nearly seven years.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Xi will attend the 18th BRICS Sum-



mit in New Delhi from September 12 to 13, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

During his visit, Xi is expected to meet Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the summit, according to sources here.

The visit is expected to be a high-profile diplomatic engagement with implications for the ongoing efforts to stabilise bilateral ties between the two Asian powers as well as for BRICS cooperation amid a volatile global situation, particularly the West Asia conflict and the Russia-Ukraine war.

As the current chair of the influential grouping, India will host the 18th BRICS Summit on September 12 and 13 in New Delhi.

Xi last visited India in 2019 for an informal summit with Modi in Mamallapuram near Chennai.

He had earlier visited Goa in 2016 to attend the BRICS summit and made his first visit to India in September 2014, when he held extensive talks with Modi. The 2014 visit came during the first terms of both leaders.

Xi's forthcoming visit is significant, as it comes amid efforts by India and China to normalise relations after a prolonged freeze following the 2020 Eastern Ladakh standoff.

Ahead of Xi's visit, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held extensive talks in Beijing last month on the boundary issue, maintaining peace and tranquility along the border and steps to improve bilateral relations.

During the 25th round of Special Representatives' talks held in Beijing on August 25, the two sides reached an eight-point consensus and agreed to advance discussions on an "Early and Substantial Harvest" of boundary delimitation and border management.

Against the backdrop of these substantive discussions on the boundary and wider bilateral issues, a Modi-Xi meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS summit is expected to be closely watched for indications of the future course of India-China relations.

The New Delhi BRICS summit will bring together the world's major emerging economies -- Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, with multilateral cooperation expected to remain at the core of the grouping's agenda.



Ganesh Fest to Roll Into 12th Day, Immersion on Sept 25

Hyderabad, Sept 11

The Bhagyanagar Ganesh Utsav Samithi (BGUS) on Thursday clarified that the Ganesh idol immersion would be held on Friday, September 25, the day of Ananta Chaturdashi, meaning the celebrations would last 12 days instead of the usual 11.

A representative explained, "The confusion over the 12-day duration of the festival is because Ananta Chaturdashi falls on a Friday. The immersion was decided based on the tithi with the help of religious scholars."

Representatives of BGUS said the Ganesh festival would begin on Monday, September 14, on Vinayaka Chavithi, with 12 days of celebrations culminating in mass immersion on September 25.

The samithi said it would hoist the National Flag at all mandapams on September 17 and 'Vande Mataram' would be sung to mark Hyderabad Liberation Day and commemorate Police Action.

Devotees would take an oath to make Hyderabad infiltrator-free.

The samithi urged all pandal organizers to maintain the ancient traditions of the festival, as around 1.5 lakh mandapams are expected to be set up this year.

For the first time this year, BGUS has constituted an IT committee, with volunteer registrations being conducted online. The samithi will hold continuous meetings with all stakeholders.

A meeting with the police department is scheduled for Friday.

Samithi general secretary Dr Ravinutala Shashidhar said various programmes had been planned for the festival. He urged all mandapams to use Swadeshi products and local vendors to use cow-based products. He said seers from various places would perform pujas during the festival.

RTC trade union polls date to be announced soon: Ponnamm

HYDERABAD:, SEPT 10

Transport Minister Ponnamm Prabhakar on Thursday said that the state government would soon announce the date for the trade union elections in the Telangana Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC).

The minister was responding to questions raised by several MLAs regarding the RTC during the Question Hour in the Assembly. Prabhakar said that while railways serve as a lifeline for the poor and middle class across the country, the RTC acts as a lifeline for the people of Telangana.

Telangana RTC buses cover approximately 30 lakh kilometres daily, transporting 65 lakh passengers to their destinations. He said that the election process for RTC labor unions is currently underway; once the elections conclude, representatives from the winning union will be included in the official committee to advance the merger process. He assured that careful steps were being taken to ensure that the difficulties encountered during RTC mergers in other states do not recur in Telangana.

The minister criticised the previous government for neglecting and undermining the RTC over the past decade. The minister recalled that after the Congress government assumed office on December 7, 2023, the 'Mahalakshmi' scheme was launched on December 9, providing free bus travel for women. He stated that the Mahalakshmi scheme not only reduced the



financial burden on women but also revitalised the RTC. He added that following the scheme's implementation, bus occupancy and passenger footfall at bus stations have increased significantly.

The minister revealed that, till date, 347.47 crore women had availed themselves of free travel, saving a total of Rs 12,171 crore. He announced plans to introduce 2,200 electric buses in Hyderabad city under the PM E-Drive scheme.

Drug tests ordered for pilots across all airlines

New Delhi, sept 10

Aviation watchdog DGCA has ordered drug tests for pilots across all airlines, with the exercise to be completed by July 2027, according to sources.

Separately, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu on Thursday said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is expected to finalise the draft of new norms for drug testing of pilots by the end of this month.

The moves come against the backdrop of the pilot-in-command of an Air India Phuket-Delhi flight, which suddenly lost nearly 300 feet in altitude, testing positive for drug use after the aircraft incident on August 4 left many passengers injured.

On September 4, Air India terminated the services of the pilot-in-command, hours after the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)'s preliminary report into the Phuket flight incident said the pilot's drug use was a serious concern and asked the regu-

lator DGCA to take appropriate action.

The sources on Thursday said the DGCA had ordered drug testing for pilots across all airlines last month and that the carriers had been asked to complete the exercise by July next year.

Naidu, on the sidelines of a conference in the national capital on Thursday, said the draft of the revised Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) regarding testing of pilots for psychoactive substances is expected to be finalised by the end of this month after discussions with stakeholders.

Currently, drug tests for pilots are conducted on a random basis. Under the DGCA's present Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR), random tests for psychoactive substances have to be conducted on 10 per cent of pilots and air traffic controllers, among others, annually.

There are more than 12,000 pilots with various commercial airlines.

Indian Navy Chief embarks on 4-day Mauritius visit to strengthen maritime cooperation



Port Louis/New Delhi: Indian Navy Chief Admiral Krishna Swaminathan is on a four-day visit to Mauritius starting Monday, during which the focus will be on strengthening the maritime cooperation and defence ties with the East African nation, officials said.The visit will continue till August 13 (Thursday). "The visit is part of India's continued engagement to strengthen bilateral maritime cooperation and deepen defence ties with Mauritius, an extremely valued partner in the Indian Ocean Region," the Ministry of Defence said in a statement.

During the visit, the Navy Chief will interact with senior leadership of the Mauritian government and hold discussions on matters of mutual interest such as maritime security, defence cooperation, capacity building and military collaboration, officials said.The Defence Ministry said that such engagements are focused on strengthening Indo-Mauritius cooperation in the maritime domain, enhancing operational-level linkages and consolidating the robust strategic partnership between India and

Mauritius.

"India and Mauritius share a close and enduring maritime partnership. The Indian Navy engages regularly with the National Coast Guard through training exchanges, operational interactions including Joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Surveillance, port visits and hydrographic surveys," the Ministry said.During this, India and Mauritius will also participate and engage in multilateral forums and cooperative initiatives. Additionally, Mauritius has been a regular participant in key Indian Navy initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, MILAN, International Fleet Review, Goa Maritime Conclave, IOS SAGAR and Exercise AIKEYME, aptly reflecting the vision of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) they share.

"The visit of Admiral Krishna Swaminathan to Mauritius after assuming charge as the Chief of the Naval Staff underscores the priority India accords to the friendship it shares with Mauritius, anchored in mutual respect, trust and a shared commitment to maritime security, regional cooperation and stability in the Indian Ocean Region," the Ministry said.Earlier, in an interview with IANS, Mauritian Foreign Minister Dhananjay Ramful had called AGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) visions as "landmark initiatives".

He also hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and role in strengthening ties between both countries."Mauritius has remained at the centre of India's diplomatic policy during Prime Minister Modi's tenure.

Trump's peace board faces cash crunch, stalling Gaza plan, sources say

JERUSALEM/CAIRO, t Donald Trump's Board of Peace has received only a tiny fraction of the \$17 billion pledged for Gaza, preventing the U.S. president from pushing ahead with his plan for the shattered Palestinian enclave's future, sources told Reuters.Ten days before U.S-Israeli attacks on Iran plunged the region into war, Trump hosted a conference in Washington that saw Gulf Arab states pledge billions for the governance and reconstruction of Gaza after a two-year pulverisation by Israel.The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.The plan envisages large-scale rebuilding of the coastal enclave after the disarmament of Palestinian militant group Hamas - whose attacks on Israel triggered the assault on Gaza - and the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The funding pledges were also meant to pay for the activities of a nascent National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), a U.S.-backed group of Palestinian technocrats intended to assume control of Gaza from Hamas.NO MONEY CURRENTLY AVAILABLEOne of the sources, a person with direct knowledge of the peace board's operations, said that out of ten countries who pledged funds, only three - the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and the U.S. itself - had contributed funding.The source said funding so far was under \$1 billion, but did not give more details. The Iran war "has affected everything," exacerbating previous funding difficulties, the source said.NCAG could not enter Gaza due to both funding and security issues, the source added. Even after a ceasefire was agreed last October, Israeli attacks have killed at least 700 people in Gaza according to health officials there, while militant attacks have killed four soldiers according to Israel.The second source, a Palestinian official familiar with the matter, said the board informed Hamas and other Palestinian factions that NCAG is unable to enter Gaza right now due to a lack of funding."No money is currently available," the official cited board envoy Nickolay Mladenovas as informing Palestinian groups.

Hamas has repeatedly said it is ready to hand over governance to NCAG, led by Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister with the Palestinian Authority, which currently exercises limited self-rule in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.Shaath's committee is meant to assume control of Gaza's ministries and run its police force.He and his 14 committee members have been cloistered in a hotel in Cairo under supervision by American and Egyptian



tian handlers, said a diplomatic source.Representatives for the Board of Peace and NCAG did not immediately respond to a request for comment.Rehabilitation of Gaza, where four-fifths of buildings were destroyed in two years of Israeli bombardments, has been projected by global institutions to cost around \$70 billion.The stuttering plan for Gaza's future echoes other ambitious initiatives by Trump, who has sought to project himself as the world's peacemaker but has struggled to end the Ukraine war as he said he would and is seeing this week's truce with Iran come under immediate severe strain.DISARMAMENT TALKSEgypt, which has been hosting the disarmament talks, invited Hamas for more meetings on Saturday, according to a source in the militant group.The ceasefire halted full-blown war but left Israeli troops in control of a depopulated zone comprising well over half of Gaza, with Hamas in power in a narrow coastal strip.

Trump's board has been leading negotiations with Hamas and other Palestinian factions on disarmament. Israel says Hamas must lay down arms before it pulls troops out of Gaza, Hamas says it will not comply without guarantees of Israel's withdrawal and a halt to firing in Gaza.The diplomatic source familiar with the disarmament talks said they remained in deadlock and feared Israel was looking for an excuse to relaunch a full-scale offensive on Gaza.Israeli military officials have said they are preparing for a swift return to full-scale war if Hamas does not lay down its weapons.The Gaza war began with Hamas' October 7, 2023, attacks on Israel that killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies.Israel's ensuing two-year campaign killed more than 72,000 Palestinians

Ukrainians and Russians doubt 32-hour Easter truce will lead to lasting peace

Ukrainian officials urged Russia on Friday to extend a ceasefire it announced for Orthodox Easter this weekend and restart talks to end the war, but people on the streets of Kyiv and Moscow doubted it would lead to lasting peace.Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday announced a 32-hour ceasefire starting on Saturday afternoon and running throughout Orthodox Easter until midnight on Sunday.The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has repeatedly proposed an Easter truce, quickly said Kyiv would abide by the measure, which Moscow had previously rejected as a "PR stunt"."People need an Easter without threats and a real move towards peace, and Russia has a chance to not return to attacks even after Easter," Zelenskyy said, in comments posted on Telegram early on Friday.

Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Ukraine was proposing that strikes should not resume after Easter, and he drew a parallel with the two-week ceasefire in the conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran, announced on Tuesday."We believe that a ceasefire is the right strategy to advance diplomatic efforts — whether we are talking about the Middle East or Russian aggression against Ukraine," he said.The Kremlin on Friday said the Easter truce was a temporary humanitarian measure, and it wanted a permanent peace deal not a ceasefire, a demand that Ukraine has described as a delaying tactic.Previous such truces have been beset with violations.Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said a visit by Putin's special investment envoy to the United States was economic and did not signal the resumption of U.S.-mediated peace talks; U.S. sanctions waived



ers on Russian oil expire on April 11.Putin has said Russia would be willing to end hostilities if Ukraine hands over the remainder of the industrialised region of Donbas - roughly 6,000 square km (2,317 square miles) - that it has been unable to conquer more than four years since its full-scale invasion. Zelenskyy has said that would betray Ukraine's defenders and that an aggressor should not dictate such terms.

Amid light snow and wintry weather in Kyiv on Friday morning, residents were skeptical that the truce would do anything to ease their situation. Many expressed hostility toward the Russian leader."He can only make promises about some ceasefire. No one is going to hand over our land to him," said 60-year-old Yuliia, huddled beneath a thick overcoat, as a street thermometer showed 2 degrees Celsius in Kyiv.

Vance sets off to Pakistan to lead talks with Iran as war's ceasefire remains shaky



Washington: President Donald Trump is tasking the member of his inner circle who has seemed to be the most reluctant defender of the conflict with Iran to now find a resolution to the war that began six weeks ago and stave off the US president's astonishing threat to wipe out its "whole civilization." Vice President JD Vance, who has long been skeptical of foreign military interventions and outspoken about the prospect of sending troops into opened conflicts, sets off Friday to lead mediated talks with Iran in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.It comes as a tenuous, temporary ceasefire appears to be on the precipice of collapsing. The chasm between Iran's public demands and those from the US and its partner Israel seem irreconcilable.And in the US, where Vance might ask voters in two years' time to make him the next president, there is growing political and economic pressure to wrap it up.

Vance is joined by Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who took part in three rounds of indirect talks with Iranian negotiators aimed at settling US concerns about Tehran's nuclear and ballistic weapons programs and its support for armed proxy groups in the Middle East before Trump and Israel launched the Feb. 28 war against Iran.The White House has provided scant detail about the format of the talks — whether they will be direct or indirect — and has not provided specific expectations for the meeting.

But the arrival of Vance for negotiations marks a rare moment of high-level US government engagement with the Iranian government. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the most direct contact had been when President Barack Obama in September 2013 called newly elected Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to discuss Iran's nuclear program.Almost immediately after the White House and Iran announced a temporary ceasefire Tuesday evening, the sides found themselves at odds over terms of the truce.Iran insisted that an end to the Israeli war in Lebanon was part of the ceasefire. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump said the truce did not cover Lebanon and the Israeli operations there continued.The US, meanwhile, demanded that Iran make good on reopening the Strait of Hormuz. The Islamic Republic had closed the critical shipping waterway in response to Israel's intensifying attacks against the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon.Trump on Thursday night said Iran was "doing a very poor job" of allowing oil tankers to pass through, writing on social media, "That is not the agreement we have!" White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said Vance, Witkoff, Kushner and Secretary of State Marco Rubio "have always been collaborating on these discussions" and said Trump was optimistic that a lasting deal can be reached during the two-week

China will not tolerate independence for Taiwan, Xi tells island's opposition leader



BEIJING, will "absolutely not tolerate" independence for Taiwan, which is the chief culprit in undermining peace in the Taiwan Strait, President Xi Jinping told the island's opposition leader on Friday, calling for efforts to advance "reunification".Cheng Li-wun, chairwoman of Taiwan's largest opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), is in China on what she has called a peace mission to reduce tensions at a time when Beijing has stepped up military pressure against the island it claims as its territory.The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.

Meeting in the Great Hall of the People, Xi told Cheng that today's world was not entirely at peace, and peace was precious.Compatriots on both sides of the strait are all Chinese - people of one family who want peace, development, exchange, and cooperation," he said, in comments carried by Taiwan television stations.ONE CHINABoth sides of the strait belong to "one China", Xi added, according to a separate state media readout."When the family is harmonious, all things will prosper," he said. "Taiwan independence is the chief culprit in undermining peace in the Taiwan Strait - we will absolutely not tolerate or condone it."Xi also mentioned the thorny subject of union between China and Taiwan, which has long been Beijing's goal but which Taiwan's government rejects.The KMT and Communist Party must "join hands to create a bright future of the motherland's reunification and national rejuvenation," he said.China refuses to talk to Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, saying he is a "separatist".Item 1 of 4 Cheng Li-wun, chairperson of the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's largest opposition party, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China April 10, 2026, in this screengrab from a video provided by CTI. CTI via REUTERS[1/4]Cheng Li-wun, chairperson of the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's largest opposition party, shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China April 10, 2026, in this screengrab from a video provided by CTI. CTI via REUTERS Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tabSpeaking to reporters in Taipei late on Friday, Taiwan's top China policymaker, Chiu Chui-cheng, said only Taiwan's people could decide their future and China

ceasefire.

"President Trump has a proven track record of achieving good deals on behalf of the United States and the American people, and he will only accept one that puts America first," Kelly said.It's the highest-stakes moment thus far for Vance, who spent much of last year as more of a background player in the Trump White House, especially as others like Elon Musk and Rubio took turns as ever-present advisers for the president.But Vance's portfolio is fattening fast, first with a mission to root out fraud in government programs at home and now to help solve a US war in the Middle East, where complicated doesn't even begin to describe things.Vance, who served in the Iraq War while in the Marines, spent two years as a US senator and a little more than one as vice president, has little diplomatic experience.

On Wednesday, he dismissed speculation that the Iranians requested that he join the talks, telling reporters: "I don't know that. I would be surprised if that was true. But, you know, I wanted to be involved because I thought I could make a difference." Jonathan Schanzer, a former Treasury Department official who is now executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a hawkish Washington think tank, said Vance, with little experience on Iran policy, is an interesting choice to lead the delegation.Trump has noted his vice president was "less enthusiastic" than other top senior officials in the Republican administration, making Vance an intriguing interlocutor for the Iranian side, Schanzer said."I think they probably prefer him knowing that his perspective on foreign intervention is one of skepticism," Schanzer said of the Iranians. "I do think that he's going to need some help. I don't think he's ever been engaged in negotiations with this kind of weight, this kind of seriousness. This is as serious as it gets."The White House has not detailed who will be in the negotiations besides Vance, Witkoff and Kushner, but Kelly said officials from the National Security Council, State Department and Pentagon "will also play a supportive role."

During early rounds of indirect nuclear talks with the Iranians before the war, Democrats and some nuclear experts questioned whether Kushner and Witkoff had enough technical knowledge. The White House has not said whether the pair, whom Trump has entrusted with some of his most difficult negotiations since returning to office, had a nuclear expert with them for those talks.It's not unusual for vice presidents to take on important negotiating roles for the president, said Joel Goldstein, a professor of law at Saint Louis University who is an expert on the history of the vice presidency.But, he said, "I don't recall a situation where a vice president has been sent to negotiate a ceasefire or peace in connection with a war the United States was involved with." Vance and Rubio are seen as the Republican Party's strongest potential 2028 presidential contenders, though neither has given a clear answer about whether he intends to run.The vice president's team is not thinking about the negotiations with an eye to future political considerations, according to a person familiar with discussions who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.As vice president, Vance inherently would carry any baggage of the administration if he eventually does run for president, Goldstein said. But stepping in to lead negotiations even further identifies him with the conflict.

?should engage with Taipei's democratically elected and legitimate government."The Chinese communists are deliberately creating the false impression that Taiwan is an internal affair of China," he added.The then-KMT-led Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists, who founded the People's Republic of China. To this day, neither government formally recognises the other.The modern KMT favours closer diplomatic and economic ties with Beijing than the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.'CHESSBOARD'Cheng told Xi that mutually beneficial cross-strait relations were what the public on both sides longed for, and that interactions and exchanges should be reciprocal."I, Li-wun, sincerely hope that one day in the future, I will have the opportunity to be the host and welcome General Secretary Xi and all of you here present in Taiwan," she added, using Xi's title as head of the Communist Party.Cheng said she hoped that through the efforts of both parties, the Taiwan Strait would no longer be a focal point of potential conflict, and would certainly not become a "chessboard for outside forces to intervene in".Speaking later to reporters in Beijing, Cheng said Xi had told her that China respected Taiwan's different social system and choice of lifestyle."But he also hopes that Taiwan will be able to affirm and acknowledge the development achievements of the mainland," she said.Reporting by Liz Lee; Writing and additional reporting by Ben Blanchard in Taipei; Editing by Himani Sarkar, Lincoln Feast and Alex Richardson

Meenakshi enters Asian Wrestling final; Hansika and Neha win bronze

New Delhi: Two-time national champion Meenakshi Goyat staged a stunning comeback to defeat South Korea's Seoyoung Park and enter the women's 53kg final, while Hansika Lamba (55kg) and Neha (59kg) secured bronze medals for India at the Senior Asian Wrestling Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Thursday.Meenakshi, who earned her place in the Indian squad by defeating two-time World Championships bronze medalist Antim Panghal, was trailing 0-2 until the closing 30 seconds of her semifinal bout. The 25-year-old turned the contest on its head with a decisive four-point throw and held on to her advantage to book a place in the final.The former Asian U-23 champion will now face China's Jin Zhang, who advanced after defeating Japan's Moe Kiyooka by fall.Later, Hansika Lamba and Neha added two more bronze medals to India's tally, following a strong showing by the men's Greco-Roman wrestlers, who had already secured two silver and three bronze medals in the opening three days of competition.

EYE SECRETS
EDITORIAL

The next coronavirus
will be AI-designed

In 1346, the Black Death arrived at the port of Caffa in Crimea on Mongol catapults. The weapon was a corpse. The delivery mechanism was medieval. The death toll over the following six years was between 75 million and 200 million people across Eurasia. The most devastating biological event in recorded human history required no laboratory, no advanced knowledge of pathogen structure, and no understanding of viral replication. It required only proximity, movement, and time.

In 2024, a company called Radical Numerics, founded by former Stanford PhD researchers, published the results of an AI model called EVO. The model treats DNA much as a large language model treats text: it reads sequences of genetic letters and learns the rules governing how those sequences produce physical biological function. Just as GPT-4 can generate a paragraph that follows the statistical patterns of human prose, EVO can generate a DNA sequence that follows the statistical patterns of biological life.

The researchers trained it on existing natural gene-editing tools and used it to generate novel CRISPR variants, which scientists then synthesised and verified in laboratory tests. They then used it to create the complete DNA genome for a bacteriophage, a bacterial virus, from scratch. The first AI-generated genome is not merely a theoretical possibility. It has already been written. The most important number in this story is not the model's context window, which grew from a few thousand tokens to one to two million, enabling it to process massive genomic sequences. Nor is it the 30 minutes EVO took to rank causal genes for Alzheimer's disease, matching two years of laboratory work. The most important number is the barrier to entry.

biology used to require a PhD in molecular biology, years of laboratory training, expensive equipment, and institutional access to biosafety facilities. EVO and its successors are compressing that barrier the way the internet compressed the barrier to publishing. Midjourney compressed the barrier to visual art, and ChatGPT compressed the barrier to writing. The capability is not yet democratised. But the trajectory is unmistakable. Every year, the knowledge required to instruct an AI model to design a novel pathogen decreases. At the same time, the models themselves become better at filling the gaps a non-expert user cannot provide. India's ability to detect and respond in time will depend on the investments it makes over the next three years, not the next three decades

Radical Numerics itself acknowledges this challenge. Its dual mandate for biodefence and therapeutic applications exists precisely because its founders recognise that programming biology lowers the barrier to creating synthetic threats, or what researchers call deepfake viruses. The people building the tool are warning about the tool. That is worth taking seriously. India's exposure to an AI-generated biological threat is not merely the general exposure that every densely populated country faces. It is compounded by three specific structural conditions. The first is population density. India hosts over 1.4 billion people in a geographic area where urban concentration, inter-State mobility and climate create conditions for rapid pathogen spread. These factors mirror, and in some ways exceed, those that contributed to the rapid spread of Covid-19 in 2020 and 2021.

Leopard strays into public
garden in Rajasthan's Kota,
rescued after 3-hour op



Kota: Panic gripped morning walkers and fitness enthusiasts in Kota on Tuesday morning after a full-grown leopard strayed into a crowded public garden in the Nayapura area of the city. The leopard was, however, later safely rescued and put under observation in Abhedha Biological Park in the city. The Chattar Villas Garden, frequented daily by locals for yoga, exercise, and morning walks, was thrown into chaos as visitors spotted the big cat roaming through the green space.

As alarmed visitors raised shouts and scrambled to safety, the frightened animal climbed up a nearby 40-foot-high mango tree. Large crowds gathered outside the garden boundary as news of the wild intruder spread rapidly throughout the city. A joint emergency team comprising forest department personnel and local police swiftly cordoned off the area to manage the surging crowd and execute a rescue mission. Using heavy machinery, including a crane, rescue teams made attempts to tranquilise the leopard atop the tree and successfully rescued the animal after nearly a 3-hour operation. "The animal climbed to the top branch of a 40-foot mango tree due to the commotion. Our team successfully darted and tranquilised the animal," Kota DFO Pramod Dhakad said. The rescued leopard was transported to Abhedha Biological Park, where it will be kept under observation, he further said, adding that the animal will be released to forests as per directions from senior forest officials. The leopard is yet to undergo medical examination to ascertain its sex and exact age, he further said. Upon receiving the report, police teams immediately arrived at the garden to disperse the gathering crowd and maintain a secure perimeter around the rescue site. "The public was advised to maintain distance to avoid agitating the leopard.

Rain deficit in all but one Karnataka
district; drought tag for more taluks



With 30 of Karnataka's 31 districts receiving below-normal rainfall—less than half the normal amount in some districts—the government is planning to declare 25 more taluks drought-hit. The government has already declared 101 taluks drought-hit. The tag makes a district eligible for specific government relief measures.

According to data from the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, districts such as Chamarajanagar (59 per cent deficit), Chikkaballapura (57 per cent), Kolar (56 per cent), and Ballari (52 per cent) are among the worst-hit districts. The rain deficit in

‘Dear DK, Flyovers Yaake?: Bengalureans
up in arms against elevated corridors



Bengaluru residents have launched an online campaign against 11 proposed elevated corridors, to be built at a cost of more than Rs 13,000 crore, arguing that these flyovers will create more problems than they solve. The online signature campaign—titled Dear DK, Flyovers Yaake? (dear DK, why flyovers?)—carried a message for Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar: "We love your swag, the guarantee schemes, and your vision for Brand Bengaluru. But building more flyovers inside Bengaluru city is wrong. The upcoming 'Elevated Corridors' flyover project will not fix traffic; it will ruin our city. You must stop it."

The campaigners argue that the alignment of these flyovers is flawed and that they will not ease traffic con-

Bengaluru Urban district is 44 per cent, with 183 mm of rainfall received between June 1 and September 8, against a normal of around 320 mm. The only district to have received normal rainfall (a -19 per cent to 19 per cent variation) is Belagavi, where the rainfall was 14 per cent below normal.

Malnad and coastal districts, which serve as prime catchment areas for rivers originating in the state, have deficits ranging from 20 per cent to 36 per cent. Speaking to reporters Tuesday, Revenue Minister G Parameshwara said the assessment of the drought in the state was being carried out in phases. "In the first phase, 101 taluks have already been declared drought-hit. The second phase of assessment is now in progress, and 25 more taluks have qualified to be declared drought-hit. They will be notified shortly," he said. Recalling that more than 200 taluks were declared drought-hit in 2023, the minister said more than 200 taluks could be declared drought-hit this year too. The minister also responded to JD(S) legislator Sharan Gowda Kandakur's allegation that there was disparity in declaring districts drought-hit. "The allegation that certain taluks have been deliberately excluded is baseless. Drought does not occur based on political affiliation. The list (of drought-hit taluks) already includes taluks represented by Opposition legislators as well," he said.

‘Shouldn’t wait for Satya Niketan-like incident’:
Gurgaon’s mushrooming PGs back under lens



For residents of Gurgaon, the collapse of a five-storey student hostel in Delhi's Satya Niketan that left seven dead has brought a pressing concern back into focus: the mushrooming of high-capacity PGs and guesthouses in residential areas. A survey by the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) had identified 453 PGs and guesthouses operating in the city's residential sectors. Eighteen were sealed in June for violations.

Sameer Puri, who lives in DLF Phase 3, where several allegedly illegal PGs and guesthouses operate, said Gurgaon could face a similar tragedy if the problem is not addressed. "It can definitely happen anytime here as well, especially on smaller plots (in U Block) where residents have built extra floors and PGs. It is a total menace," he said. He said two PGs on his road were sealed in June during a drive against unauthorised commercial establishments. "It has become much more peaceful. But much more needs to be done, and across Gurgaon," added Puri.

At Suncity township, resident Kusum Sharma said G Block (EWS) has several PGs that have allegedly not applied for commercial connections or land-use conversions. "Surveys are done to identify these, but enforcement does not go beyond that. As residents, we can only alert authorities. While those with illegal stilts have been given notices, the PGs have not been so far. They shouldn't wait for a Satya Niketan like incident here," she said. The issue is before the Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC), which took suo motu cognisance of unregistered PGs and guesthouses operating in the city in January and sought action-taken reports from various authorities. The three-member HHRC bench, headed by Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra and comprising members Kuldeep Jain and Deep Bhatia, noted that commercial lodging in residential premises amounted to an unauthorised change of land use. In its July order uploaded recently, the commission observed that such operations lead to "overcrowding, power and water infrastructure collapse, sanitation issues, traffic congestion and serious safety risks". The panel warned that lack of structural safety clearances and absence of emergency exits gravely endanger the right to life of students and working professionals, citing previous fire disasters in student hubs at Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar and Noida. According to an action-taken report dated March 24 submitted to the commission by HSVP, of the 453 PGs, 121 of the establishments identified were under Estate Officer-I and 332 under Estate Of-

ficer-II. An affidavit filed by HSVP Administrator Vaishali Singh and examined by the commission last month said both estate officers had initiated enforcement proceedings by issuing show-cause notices under Section 17(3) of the HSVP Act, 1977, which governs violations of tenancy and misuse of allotted residential plots. Between June 18 and 20 and July 3 and 4, the enforcement wing of the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) Haryana sealed 15 PGs, comprising 476 rooms, and three guesthouses/hotels, comprising 87 rooms, in DLF Phase III. The DTCP told the commission that a survey had identified widespread violations across DLF Phases 1 to 5. But action on the ground was initially held up by a stay granted by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in November 2025.

After the High Court modified its order on May 29, 2026, limiting the restraint to petitioners who had filed specific applications, enforcement teams began sealing-cum-demolition drives. Using property tax data from the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG), the DTCP also identified 50 unauthorised PGs and guest houses operating on residential plots in other licensed colonies and issued notices, it told the Commission. In a consolidated status report submitted to the commission by DTCP Haryana, the district administration and the District Town Planner (Enforcement), officials said that only 218 guesthouse permissions had been granted under the state's 2021 policy within their statutory domain. That domain is confined to licensed private colonies under the Haryana Development and Regulation of Urban Areas Act, 1975. A report submitted to the commission by the Commissioner of Police, Gurugram, stated that (as of March) "no specific complaint has so far been received regarding any PG or guesthouse being run illegally without complying with the prescribed safety standards", though police assured swift legal action if complaints surface. The HHRC in July directed the HSVP Administrator to expedite follow-up reports from both estate officers and asked the Directorate of Urban Local Bodies, Haryana Fire and Emergency Services, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) and the MCG to submit their pending progress reports ahead of the next hearing on October 6.

TGSRTC retirees demand
release of long-pending dues

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 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.

Trinamool MP Nadimul
Haque grilled after ED raids
over Rs 60-crore fraud



The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which carried out a 24-hour marathon raid at the residence and office premises of Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha MP Nadimul Haque, said Tuesday the operation was conducted to gather details regarding an alleged Rs 60-crore financial fraud linked to his Urdu newspaper, Akhbar-E-Mashriq.

The searches began at 6.30 am on Monday and continued until Tuesday morning, said ED sources. The officials also questioned Haque at his office after bringing him back from Ranchi in his car, they added.

After examining bank records, transactions and digital evidence, ED sources said Haque was unable to provide adequate documentation for the Rs 60-crore transaction. The officials visited Haque's office and residence to examine documents and other evidence. The ED has alleged that illegal financial transactions were carried out from the newspaper's office and that funds belonging to the Trinamool Congress were also involved. The raids were conducted on seven premises across Ranchi, Delhi and Kolkata, including the newspaper's office in Park Circus, Kolkata. ED officials searched the premises for documents and digital evidence to trace the alleged money trail, sources said. According to sources, the raids were conducted based on a complaint lodged with the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate last month. Haque did not respond to the calls or messages from The Indian Express on Tuesday.

Russia reaffirms S-400 delivery
commitment to India in 2026



New Delhi: Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday confirmed that the delivery of Russia's S-400 Triumf air defence systems to India in 2026 remains on the agenda of discussions between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during their upcoming meeting in New Delhi on Friday, on the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit. Russia is capable of fulfilling its obligations, and they will be fulfilled. This issue is being mentioned during the conversations of our two leaders, said Peskov while speaking to Indian media during a virtual briefing hosted by Sputnik India. In 2018, New Delhi signed a \$5.43 billion agreement with Russia to purchase five S-400 air defence systems. The delivery of the two systems remaining under the contract is expected to be completed this year. On March 27, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh approved the acquisition of additional Russian S-400 air defence missile systems, further underscoring the growing defence cooperation between New Delhi and Moscow. The Ministry of Defence stated that, for the Indian Air Force, proposals were cleared for the procurement of Medium Transport Aircraft, S-400 Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile System, Remotely Piloted Strike Aircraft and overhaul of Su-30 Aero engine Aggregates. The induction of Medium Transport Aircraft by replacing the transport fleet of AN32 and IL76 will meet the strategic, tactical and operational airlift requirements of the Services, it said. "The S-400 system will counter enemy long-range air vectors targeting vital areas, while the Remotely Piloted Strike Aircraft will enable undertaking Offensive Counter and Coordinated Air Operations, also providing stealth Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance activities.

The overhaul of Su-30 aero engine and its aggregates will increase the service life of the aircraft and fulfil the operational requirement of the Air Force," the Ministry of Defence had stated on March 27. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, Peskov further stressed the need to advance the long-standing defence cooperation between the two countries and expressed Russia's readiness to share its advanced military equipment with India. Referring to the BrahMos missile programme, he said the two countries should now explore ways to upgrade the system by adding new capabilities and improving its effectiveness and competitiveness. We are satisfied with our cooperation in the military field and in the technical-military field with India. It has very rich traditions, and it is a deeply rooted cooperation. We have very good military equipment some of which is the best in the world and we are ready to share this equipment with our Indian partners. We have even gone further in this cooperation than just buying and selling: we are producing jointly.

Ahmedabad Chief Fire Officer arrested on bribery charges



THE GUJARAT Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday arrested Amit Dongre, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) of the Ahmedabad Fire and Emergency Services (AFES), and a private individual for allegedly demanding and receiving a bribe of Rs 36,000 in lieu of approving the Fire Safety Certificates (FSCs) of six buildings in the city. The ACB identified the other arrested person as Bhavsinh Pratap Jhala (31), from near Vijay Crossroads and claimed that Rs 36,000 paid to the duo as part of a bribe to approve FSCs for six buildings at Rs 6,000 per building has been recovered. Amitkumar Anandrao Dongre (47) CFO, Ahmedabad, Class-1, was arrested later on the basis of a phone call between him and Jhala talking

purportedly about the bribe amount, said the ACB.

A statement issued by the ACB said, "The complainant in this case works as a Fire Safety Officer (FSO), who provides fire safety related services, in Ahmedabad city. Through him, fire safety NOCs of a total of six buildings located in Ahmedabad city were sent for approval on the Gujarat government portal, but the accused (Jhala) demanded a bribe of Rs 6,000 per NOC, totaling Rs 36,000 for approval of all 6 NOCs." The complainant then went to the ACB office in Vadodara and registered a complaint on the basis of which Inspector A N Prajapati of Vadodara ACB laid a trap along with government witnesses. The action was supervised by Vadodara ACB Assistant Director B M Patel. Jhala was caught red-handed by talking to the complainant about the alleged bribe and receiving the payment of Rs 36,000. The ACB statement said, "The accused, Amitkumar A Dongre, called Jhala and they agreed to the bribe amount. On the advice of Dongre, Jhala demanded the bribe and accepted it." Legal proceedings were initiated against both of them. Further investigation is underway, police said. Amitkumar A Dongre was appointed CFO of the AFES on October 18, 2024, by the Staff Selection and Appointments Committee of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC). The post had been vacant and run on interim charge since the previous full-time CFO M F Dastoor, retired on January 31, 2021. Dongre took charge of the fire service of the biggest city in Gujarat on December 24, 2024.

At Gujarat tourism fair, Israel among countries wooing travellers back post West Asia crisis

ORGANISED AGAINST the backdrop of the West Asia crisis, the three-day Travel and Tourism Fair 2026 at the Mahatma Mandir convention and exhibition centre in Gandhinagar saw several country and state representatives going all out to bring back tourists and business. Israel, which was among those that saw a massive drop in tourist footfall, was in focus as the 'featured country' at the fair.

Asked how tourism had been impacted since the West Asia Crisis, Marketing Director of the Israel Ministry of Tourism Amruta Bangera said, "It has been impacted but I think we are growing", highlighting that "it should not be a problem to reach the 2019 numbers". She elaborated that in 2019, 65,900 Indians visited Israel, a number that fell to 44,000 in 2023 and to 13,600 in 2025. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, who inaugurated the fair on Thursday, said it would play an important role in showcasing Gujarat when the state had declared 2025 as the "Year of Tourism."

On how they would reach out to Gujaratis, Bangera told "Gujaratis are the most experiential people, who want to seek new destinations, different experiences", therefore "Israel becomes a perfect blend. It's not the first destination that people travel to, but if a person has already done Europe, US and UK they want something new and this is the perfect place where there is something new for everyone." On what set Israel apart, she said, "It is the only democracy in the Middle East, and every Indian will feel welcome there".

"Right now we do not have any direct connectivity with any airline, but the major carriers around the world have already returned to Israel with full operation. Right now you have connecting airlines via Dubai or Gulf carriers. Even with layover, it is around seven hours", she



added. Mohan Gill, manager at Topview Holiday from China hinting at the rise in Indian visitors to the country said, "Entire movement has shifted". The fair saw representatives from Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates as well. Aziz Chauham, CEO of Fly Vaccanze stationed in Thailand, stressed that "as of now, hotel rooms are empty", further explaining that "Indians used to travel in a budget-friendly way, so after the crisis of the Middle East, there is a huge surcharge on fuel. Air Asia, BH Air, Thailand airlines which were operating from Ahmedabad have now stopped their operations. For this reason, the fares of the flights are very expensive. So they are now switching from international to domestic travel." Other state representatives, including Bhanu Pratap Joint Director of the Rajasthan Tourism department, emphasised that "our domestic market is strong enough". Asked about foreign visitors, he said, "Even before the war, we were not having that many numbers of tourists. Therefore there is hardly any effect from these countries, but we have very strong ties with Japan, Singapore and Malaysia".

'Sadan jhooth da adda nahi': AAP MLA confronts Punjab Minister in Vidhan Sabha



The ruling Aam Aadmi Party legislators turned the heat on their own party's government in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha Friday, with one of them accusing a minister of misleading the House "by telling lies" while offering to resign if the minister could prove his claim. The exchange between Rural Development and Panchayats Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond and AAP MLA from Payal Manwinder Singh Gyaspura came during the Question Hour on a discussion on the delayed auction of panchayat land in Daulatpur village. Responding to Gyaspura's question, Sond said that the village sarpanch was suspended, an administrator had been appointed, and the auction was being conducted on Friday. He argued that earlier auction attempts had failed because nobody came forward to bid after the department increased lease rates by 20 per cent, forcing it to follow the prescribed procedure of subsequent auctions.

Gyaspura, however, asked why no administrator had been appointed for nearly four months after the sarpanch's suspension. When Sond claimed that auction attempts had already been made earlier in the year, the MLA rejected the assertion. "If the minister can prove that even a single auction was conducted this year, I will resign from my MLA-ship," Gyaspura declared in the House. He then said, "Eh sadan jhooth bolan da adda nahi hai. Iss layi ithe sach boleya jaave. (This House is not a place to tell lies. Please speak the truth here)". He also disputed the minister's reply regarding the suspension of a Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO) and asked why departmental proceedings were being initiated if the officer was not at fault. Sond replied that the BDPO had been suspended in connection with an unrelated case and not in the Daulatpur matter. He also defended the department's record, saying it had increased panchayat lease income across Punjab and promised to place detailed figures before the House in the next session. Another AAP MLA, Kuljit Singh Randhawa, too put the government on the mat over the long-delayed tehsil complex in Dera Bassi. In a supplementary to his starred question, Randhawa said it had been 18 months since he first raised the matter, yet little had changed. "Dera

Bassi, with a population of around 15 lakh, still does not have a proper judicial and administrative complex. The DSP office, SDM office, BDPO office and tehsil office are functioning from different locations, forcing people to shuttle between offices," he said. Randhawa reminded the government that it had announced that the complex would be completed soon, but asked, "Where does the project stand today?" Housing and Urban Development Minister Hardip Singh Mundian said the SDM office had been shifted temporarily and new judicial complex was nearing completion. He invited Randhawa to meet him with officials on August 17 to resolve the issue at the earliest. Randhawa accepted the invitation but remarked, "Better late than never". Another AAP MLA, Gurdit Singh, said the existing norm of constructing watercourses for holdings of 50 acres or more was leaving many cultivators out in Faridkot. He said Faridkot was badly affected by waterlogging (sem) and also fell in the dark zone, where farmers faced restrictions on groundwater use. He said most farmers in the constituency owned small landholdings of two to three acres and could not benefit under the existing policy. "The government should also construct common water channels for farmers owning less than 50 acres," he said.

Replying, Water Resources Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal said the government had completed 39 canal works in the Faridkot Assembly segment at a cost of Rs 13.12 crore, covering 109 km. Another 23 works had been taken up during 2026-27 at a cost of Rs 18.65 crore. Of these, 17 works worth Rs 15.13 crore were nearing completion, while the remaining six projects costing Rs 3.54 crore would begin soon. Goyal said the issue of constructing watercourses for holdings below 50 acres would be taken up. The minister added that the government had spent Rs 104 crore on reining the Sirhind Feeder to address seepage and improve water supply in the area. Three major bridges had also been built over the Rajasthan and Sirhind feeders. "In all, around Rs 188 crore has been spent on irrigation infrastructure in Faridkot," Goyal said, assuring the House that the remaining canal works would be completed at the earliest. Another AAP MLA Sarbjit Kaur Manuke said the newly built School of Eminence in Jagraon was facing a shortage of teachers after new students were admitted. She also questioned the government over the lack of separate toilets for boys and girls at government school in Tihara village, and asked when the issue would be resolved. She said a school at Hathur had a science stream but no science teacher, forcing villagers to arrange teaching staff on their own. She said another school, upgraded to plus two in 2017, was still waiting for sanctioned teacher posts. Responding, Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains said the department would look into the adjustment of teachers between schools.

Pargat raises copyright strikes by AAP: 'Gagging media, free speech'



Congress MLA Pargat Singh on Friday accused the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab of suppressing free speech by issuing copyright strikes against journalists and Opposition leaders on social media. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Vidhan Sabha, Pargat referred to reports that the social media accounts of AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal had faced restrictions and said the party had termed it an attack on the Opposition's right to speak. "In a democracy, the Opposition has the right to express itself. If the AAP says restrictions on Kejriwal's accounts amount to an attempt by the BJP to silence the opposition, then the same principle should apply in Punjab," he said.

Pargat alleged that journalists and opposition leaders in Punjab had been served copyright strikes over content posted online, effectively restricting their freedom of expression. "Who gave them the right to issue copyright strikes against journalists and opposition leaders? That too amounts to curbing freedom of speech," he said. The Congress MLA also flagged the alleged misuse of small hotels, particularly those located near bus stands, railway stations and colleges and claimed that many such establishments rented out rooms by the hour without proper verification of guests. Pargat alleged that some of these hotels were being used for drug trafficking and that young people were being blackmailed after compromising videos were secretly recorded. He claimed the police, intelligence agencies and the Home Department were aware of the issue and alleged that an organised network, extending to neighbouring states, was involved. Pargat said strict action was needed to protect young people from exploitation and criminal networks operating through such establishments. Congress MLA Tripat Rajinder Singh Bajwa expressed concern over the state's preparedness for the upcoming paddy procurement season, warning that farmers could face hardships as paddy would not be lifted if the government failed to address storage issue. "The godowns are filled to the brim. There is no space left for storage," he said. Bajwa said a large quantity of last year's paddy stock was yet to be milled, creating an acute shortage of storage space ahead of the new procurement season. He claimed that nearly 30-40% of the previous year's paddy was still lying in storage sheds. He also raised the shortage of railway rakes

UN chief backs probe into PoK protest killings



United Nations: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres backs his human rights chief's call for an impartial inquiry into the killings of protesters in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), his Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said on Friday. Haq said that there should be accountability if peaceful protesters were harmed.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, has called for "prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all deaths that have occurred due to the unrest, both among protesters and members of security forces" during the popular protests against election irregularities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Asked at his briefing about Turk's statement last month, Haq said, "The Secretary-General supports the work of his High Commissioner, and we certainly hope

for lifting foodgrain, saying the state required 40-50 goods trains daily but was receiving only four to five.

"Paddy will again remain stranded in mandis if immediate steps are not taken. Please wake up and arrange adequate railway rakes and create storage space. Otherwise, farmers will once again suffer during procurement," Bajwa said. Earlier, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa also launched a sharp attack on the Punjab government over alleged illegal mining, citing recent observations by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Punjab and Haryana High Court to press for the constitution of a House committee to investigate the issue. The LoP reminded Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan that he had earlier requested the constitution of a House committee after the session. He alleged that the state government was "not serious" about acting against illegal mining. The senior leader said the NGT had directed the Punjab government to file a fresh progress report within four weeks in a case relating to alleged illegal mining that reportedly damaged a bridge over the Sutlej river. He alleged that reports had been lying unattended for months without any meaningful action. He also flagged alleged illegal mining in Pathankot. He alleged that a Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO), Kuldeep Singh, was first posted in the area at the instance of a minister, promoted as District Development and Panchayat Officer on February 20, 2023, and within three days appointed Additional Deputy Commissioner (Development). He alleged that on February 27, the officer allotted 92 acres of mineral rich gram panchayat land at Narot Jaimal Singh at throwaway prices to a private individual before retiring the very next day. Bajwa said he had written to the Punjab Governor on August 11, 2023, seeking action in the matter. The Congress leader then cited the ED's July 7, 2026 searches at 16 locations linked to alleged illegal mining. He alleged that two close political associates of a serving minister had been arrested, nearly Rs 1.75 crore in cash had been recovered and Rs 91.34 lakh in bank deposits frozen. He named Shri Sai Stone Crusher and Shiv Shankar Stone Crusher among the entities searched. Reading out portions of the ED statement, Bajwa said the agency had found that the individuals and entities searched had "illegally excavated, purchased, sold and transported sand and river-bed material without proper authorisation and without paying due taxes and royalty". He said the ED was also investigating the role of certain government officials suspected of facilitating illegal mining or failing to take preventive and corrective measures, causing huge losses to the state exchequer. Bajwa also referred to an ongoing public interest litigation before the high court on mining in the border districts of Pathankot and Gurdaspur. Quoting the court's observations, he said illegal mining across the Ravi river was detrimental to national security

that the pleas made by Volker Turk will be listened to. "It's important that all authorities everywhere allow for peaceful protest, and certainly that is the case here" in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the UN Chief's Deputy Spokesperson added. "If there have been people harmed for engaging in peaceful protest, there needs to be accountability for that," he added.

About 50 protesters have been killed in the recent protests by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) against Pakistan reserving seats for outsiders in the elections to the local legislature. The Human Rights office said, "The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) — a movement behind the protests comprising traders, transporters, students, lawyers, activists and others — has been banned under anti-terrorism laws for allegedly threatening public order and security." "Some of the group's leaders have subsequently been arrested. The criminalisation of a civil society organisation and imposition of strict limitations on gatherings raise serious concerns about infringements on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association," it said. Turk called for giving the detained JAAC leaders "access to legal representation and their families" and said, "Their rights to due process and fair trial must be fully guaranteed," according to his Spokesperson Jeremy Laurence. The Security Council Resolution 40 from 1948 demands that Pakistan withdraw its forces and citizens from the area it occupies.

Trump to approach US Supreme Court over White House complex



Washington: US President Donald Trump said his administration would immediately approach the US Supreme Court after an appellate court ruling against continued construction of a military and security complex at the White House. Trump said two appellate judges had voted against what he described as a "desperately needed Military Center" required for the national security of Washington and the country. "The decision has been stayed, and does not take effect for a period of time. We will be immediately appealing to the United States Supreme Court," Trump said in a post on Truth Social. The President cited a dissent by Judge Neomi Rao, who argued that the lower court had no jurisdiction because the plaintiff lacked standing to halt construction. "This was a blatant abuse of discretion," Rao said, according to the excerpts shared by Trump. "To begin with, the district court had no jurisdiction because the Trust has no standing to stop construction at the White House," she said. Rao said the balance of equities "overwhelmingly favours the government". She accused the district court of placing "the aesthetic displeasure of a single passerby" above the government's security concerns and the risks of leaving an open construction site at the President's home and office. "The district court seized supervision of construction at the White House, and my colleagues affirm this judicial overreach," Rao said. "Because the injunction is beyond the proper province of the federal courts, construction should be allowed to continue." Trump described the ruling as politically motivated and unlawful. He said the military and the Secret Service viewed it as a national security threat because the complex was designed to

protect the country and future presidents. According to Trump, the integrated project includes bomb shelters, a hospital and medical facilities, top-secret military installations, protective partitioning and missile-resistant steel. He said it would also include drone-proof ceilings and roofs, military-grade ventilation and glass capable of resisting bullets, ballistic impacts and blasts. "It is all tied together as one big, expensive, and very complex unit, which is vital for National Security and Military Operations of the United States of America!" Trump said. The President argued that the ruling jeopardised White House employees, future presidents and their families. He said visiting heads of state, dignitaries and members of the public could also be affected. Trump said the secure ballroom was being built ahead of schedule and under budget. He described it as a gift from himself and other private supporters and said it would impose no cost on taxpayers.

HCA Under-19 selection matches: Five centuries highlight Hyderabad games



Hyderabad: Centuries by Shaik Rehaan Roshan (107, 108b, 8x4, 5x6), his fourth consecutive ton this season for Team F; Ahaan Satwalekar (108, 124b, 16x4, 1x6) for Team C; M. Hansin Reddy (105, 84b, 12x4, 2x6) for Team B; D. Jannmesh Singh (126, 57b, 12x4, 10x6) for Team H; and B. Hisanth P. Charan (100, 94b, 15x4, 3x6), along with a fine spell by G. Aryan Reddy (7/47), were some of the highlights of the HCA men's Under-19 one-day selection matches here on Monday.Team F 334 in 49.5 overs (Shaik Rehaan Roshan 107, Harsh Gandra 85, Ujwal Yadav 35, Ved Reddy A 38; Umadi Atharv 3/60, Bhukya Ganesh 3/78) bt Team E 165 in 37.1 overs (B. Mohit Sai 56, Aryan Reddy K 33, M. Navtej 44, SM Hussain Sayeed 3/33).

Team A 224 in 43.4 overs (Yoginath Uppari 84, N. Nitesh Naik 33, Nakka Ritesh 3/44, G. Aryan Reddy 7/47) bt Team C 194 in 48.1 overs (Arhaan Satwalkar 108, M. Charan Kumar Reddy 3/29).Team D 253 in 44 overs (P. Advith Reddy 39, Lokesh Myka 52, Aditya Vardhan 68, Yashveer Goud 4/33) lost to Team B 254/5 in 37.3 overs (M. Hansin Reddy 105, P. Srinivasa Manikanta 30, Sai Devesh Javaji 47, M. Rajiv Reddy 31 not out).

Team I 252 in 46.3 overs (P. Charan Teja 45, Mote Midun 44, T. Deekshith 41, P. Varun 4/48) bt Team G 90 in 19.5 overs (Mohd Sohail 3/43, M. Durya Ujwal 3/5).Team H 347 in 46.4 overs (D. Jannmesh Singh 126, Ritvik Goud 68, Pranay Aheer 34, B. Hishanth P. Charan 4/58) bt Team J 219 in 39 overs (K. Yogendhar Reddy 38, B. Hisanth P. Charan 100).Team L 149/8 in 20 overs (Jashwanth Mote 52) bt Team K 145/6 in 20 overs (P. Sai Ram 36, K. Sai Nehal 39 not out, Naman Choudhary 32).HCA under-16 inter-schools and colleges knock-out tournament:Track

Live ScoresAdilabad Dist-1 147 in 36 overs (Yash Raj Singh 34, Ruhaan Verma 3/16) lost to The HPS-Begumpet 147/2 in 21.5 overs (Aaryan Partani 41 not out, Ruhaan Verma 57 not out).

Gowtham Model School-Chandanagar 277/6 in 49 overs (Monishwar Reddy 137, Tanish B 43) bt Mahbubnagar Dist-1 97 in 29.5 overs (S. Sai Varun Naik 30, Sai Nitish Reddy 4/16).Delhi Public School-Miyapur 78 in 26.5 overs (Nurhaan 5/13, Adersh Kumar 4/24) lost to Gowtham Model School-West Marredpally 79/0 in 9.5 overs (G. Sai Vaibhav 51 not out).

The HPS Ramanthapur 306/6 in 37 overs (G. Vishnu 91, Yadhu 59, Srikar Avaneesh 61, Lalith Yashwanth 3/59) bt Pragathi Central School 60 in 15.4 overs (K. Vihaan 3/12).Pallavi Model School-Alwal 331/4 in 50 overs (M. Chiranjeevi 151 not out, B. Amarnadh 52, Rudra Rao 67) bt Suchitra Academy International School 219 in 31.3 overs (Peddi Vivaan Reddy 113, Tanush S 30, Siva Rama Ashrit 37, P. Aarush 5/36).Johnson Grammer School-Mallapur 190 in 43 overs (Hanuveer Reddy Y 73) bt Pallavi International School-Gandipet 156 in 30.5 overs (Shaunak Sharma 33, D. Vihaan Reddy 34, Y. Hanuveer Reddy 4/30).

JRS International School-Nampally 306/3 in 40 overs (P. Adhrit Reddy 150 not out, Shivasai P 63, Shaik Mohd Abdul Azeez 47) bt Vijaya High School-Kapra 45 in 12.1 overs (K. Nikhil Reddy 6/12).Akshara International School-LB Nagar 297/9 in 48 overs (Rishith N. Gujjari 107, Nakul Pokar 68, V. Hari Haran Reddy 32, L. Charan 5/54) bt Slate The School-Karmanghat 99 in 27.2 overs (T. Harsha Vardhan 35, Nakul Pokar 6/11).Bhavishya School-Hasthinapuram 184 in 44.2 overs (K. Akshay Ram 60, S. Sathwik 3/26) lost to Sage School-Medipally 185/1 in 17.4 overs (D. Aarav 114).Khammam Dist-1 443/4 in 34 overs (G. Prasanna Kumar 162, J. Dheeraj Sai 60, A. Sai Saketh 72, CH Chaitanya 116 not out) bt Oasis School-Ranga Reddy 44 all out in 11.2 overs (A. Dwipad Naik 5/27, Ujwal Ganesh 5/42).Delhi Public School-Khajaguda 144 in 24.1 overs (Vivansh Rao 3/18) bt Neelkanth Vidyapeeth R School 80 in 20.4 overs (Dhruv Bharadwaj 3/11, Naman Sai 3/13).Slate The School-Ameerpet 72 in 23.2 overs (Thakur Paras Singh 4/14, S. Thaman 3/12) lost to Oakridge Int School-Gachibowli 77/1 in 8.2 overs (K. Ritvik Goud 39 not out).BMRS Grammer H School 63 all out in 14.4 overs (Sanjay 4/25) lost to St Peter's H School-Bowenpally 64/1 in 4.2 overs.Oakridge Int School-Bachupally 83 in 22.3 overs (M. Venkata Abhinav 30, N. Sai Anurag Rathod 6/15) lost to Delhi Public School-Nadergul 84/3 in 10.5 overs (N. Sai Anurag Rathod 37 not out).Meluha School-Gandipet 142 in 36.2 overs (P. Krishna Chandu 36 not out, Sanath Kasat 3/45) bt Slate The School-Himayathnagar 70 in 21.4 overs (G. Karthik 6/7).St Marks HS Tandur 49 in 14.4 overs (B. Srinadh Goud 3/9) lost to Gowtham Model School-Ameerpet 51/1 in 6 overs.

Javokhir Sindarov earns Magnus Carlsen's respect before Gukesh clash

Javokhir Sindarov has been turning heads all year. The latest to be impressed? Magnus Carlsen.Despite his team's crushing 15-3 defeat at the hands of Alpine APL Pipers at the 2026 Global Chess League, the Uzbek challenger earned rare praise from the Norwegian great after holding him to a solid draw on the Icon board.Sindarov didn't allow Carlsen to make any inroads. "Sindarov was very good. He has a very good positional understanding, and he certainly put a lot of pressure on me early in the game," Carlsen said after the match.Three of Sindarov's teammates lost with white pieces, leaving him stranded on the top board. Carlsen called Sindarov a well-rounded player with no apparent weaknesses."I think he had more draw options that he didn't go for, because his team desperately needed him to win. And I think he understood that and because of that he was putting himself in a difficult position. Overall, he's very well rounded, doesn't have any obvious weaknesses," Carlsen said.Carlsen hasn't had the best of starts on the individual front by his standards at GCL 4, even though his team, defending champion Pipers, are cruising. They lead the points table with nine points from three wins in four games.Magnus Carlsen in action for Alpine Pipers during GCL 2026. (GCL) Magnus Carlsen in action for Alpine Pipers during GCL 2026. (GCL)"It has been a little bit underwhelming. But the team is doing fantastic; as long as they are doing well, I'm happy," the legend said.

Carlsen came to the GCL on the back of a dominant win at the Esports World Cup in Paris, where he didn't lose a single game. In the GCL too, he is yet to lose, but there have been multiple occasions when he seemed under pressure. His mastery, however, has allowed him to wriggle out of difficult situations, with one win and three draws to his name.Analysing his game against Sindarov, Carlsen said: "I was quite happy with the way I navigated the early-middle game, but it took a little bit too much time. Towards the end, it was very shaky. I changed the rhythm from more or less trying to think to just blitz. So that part has been a little bit difficult so far."Carlsen played an odd move, 3. f6, in the opening against Sindarov, which looked like a mistake or a deep tactical line for the longest time. He revealed the idea came from a misclick from his coach during training, but they used it to good effect."It was origi-



nally from my coach, it was a misclick. And then he started looking at it and I like the general idea of taking a random move in the opening. With computer analysis, you can make pretty much anything work," he explained.Magnus Carlsen's Pipers thrashed Javokhir Sindarov's Gambits 15-3 to lay down a marker.Magnus Carlsen's Pipers thrashed Javokhir Sindarov's Gambits 15-3 to lay down a marker. Carlsen flagged Viswanathan Anand in the clash between Pipers and PBG Alaskan Knights. Anand held a slight advantage in the opening, but Carlsen used his clock well to put pressure back in the middle and endgame, eventually winning after Anand ran out of time.When asked about the game with the Indian legend, he said: "I felt like I was outplaying a little bit in the middle game. Was pretty happy with the position from the opening and then later on. And then, again, I was a little bit shaky with little time, and I think for a period there he was defending very well, not making it any worse. And then I just obviously resigned myself to a draw, and then I randomly glanced at his clock and saw that it was out. That's how it goes sometimes."Ian Nepomniachtchi had Carlsen in a stranglehold for the majority of their game but failed to convert the winning endgame. Carlsen credited his luck for wriggling out of the position. "It was very tough. I kind of almost got what I wanted from the opening, but I misjudged something later, and he completely outplayed me. It was certainly a combination of luck and skill to get out of that one, because you don't do that without any help."

Jyothi Surekha Vennam ready for fourth Games challenge

Mumbai: Having won a medal at each of her three previous appearances at the Asian Games, star compound archer Jyothi Surekha Vennam will head into the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, with plenty of confidence and a different set of challenges.It will be her fourth consecutive Asian Games, bringing familiar territory in some ways and a new challenge in others. The 30-year-old compound archer, who has won three gold, one silver and one bronze medal at the Asian Games so far, will now be part of a new Indian women's team that is still finding its rhythm together.

With the Games as the priority this year, Jyothi's preparation has centred on getting every detail right, both with her equipment and herself."We are working really hard, preparing ourselves, making sure that everything is good, whether it's our equipment or ourselves, and working towards it," she said.Archery may not appear as physically strenuous as some other sports, but the demands of the sport extend well beyond the physical. For Jyothi, the challenge becomes clearer once someone actually picks up the equipment, where technique, control and mental

strength come together to execute a shot."Not only archery, like any sport, when someone is playing, it seems really easy, and we can also just do it. But it's not the case; like every sport has its own things, like some techniques and all. That's what I believe. And once you start training or once you start, you know, using the equipment and all, then you get to know like how hard it is," she explained.For an archer heading into her fourth Asian Games, that mental strength also means not getting weighed down by what has come before. Despite winning a medal at every Asian Games she has competed in, Jyothi says her focus remains on the competitions ahead."Right now I'm just focused on giving my best at the Games rather than thinking about any other things."For Jyothi, the women's team brings a new dynamic this time around. The squad has already had two opportunities to compete together at the World Cup stages, and those outings have helped the athletes get used to one another and build confidence as a team."Coming to the team, it's a new team for us because this is the first time that we got to play as a team, especially for the women's team, I would like to say.

‘If you heard full interview...’: Umar Gul defends blaming cold weather for Pakistan’s Headingley Test loss



Former Pakistan fast bowler Umar Gul has defended his comments after Pakistan's defeat to England in the first Test at Headingley, in which he blamed cold weather for the performance of the side's fast bowlers. Gul, who as assistant coach was among the casualties of Pakistan Cricket Board's extraordinary purge after they lost the second Test at Lord's, has now defended those comments, which reportedly became a reason for his sacking, after it was slammed by the team's former head coach Jason Gillespie.

Gul's reaction came in a post on X that he made in

Akram says he misses mentor Imran Khan: ‘I haven’t spoken to him for 3 years’



Wasim Akram recently spoke out in an interview, urging the authorities to ensure that former Pakistan captain Imran Khan receives proper medical care. Back in February, Akram was one of the first Pakistan players, former or current, who talked about about Imran's situation, appealing to the Pakistan authorities to see to it that Khan 'receives the best possible medical care.'The 73-year-old Imran has been lodged at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since 2023 after being convicted in corruption cases. His continued detention and reported health concerns have triggered criticism from his family and several former international cricketers."Imran Khan was my mentor. He's my friend, I miss him a lot. I haven't spoken to him for three years. "It's so unfortunate, politically, what's happening with him. The court of law is the court of law. But as far as his health is concerned, there can be no compromise on that," Akram said in an interview with The Athletic.

Recently, after Imran's sons, Kasim and Sulaiman, confided their concerns about their imprisoned father's health in Pakistan's notorious Adiala jail, in a Sky Sports interview with Mike Atherton, the Pakistan Cricket Board deliberated on not taking the field during the second Test against England at Lord's.The PCB, whose head, Mohsin Naqvi, is also Pakistan's minister of interior affairs, had requested the broadcasters not to air the interview, but

Root on Kevin Pietersen’s return to England setup: ‘Got a huge amount of energy’



England Test captain Joe Root believed Kevin Pietersen's return to the national set-up could prove hugely beneficial to the team, recalling how the former captain helped him improve his game against spin during the early stages of his international career.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, and Root is among the few members of the current England set-up to have shared a dressing room with him.

The pair played together during the early stages of Root's international career, including on England's tour of India in 2012, when the Yorkshire batsman made his Test debut in Nagpur. Root recalled closely observing Pietersen during that tour and seeking his advice on batting against spin."Probably the last player to have played with him still going. I really enjoyed him as a senior player coming into the team. He was someone I would be shadowing all the time. That first tour of India, in particular, I would try and buddy up in the nets, watch how he practised, watch how he did things, ask him for advice, and he was really open, really honest, very helpful, in terms of how to get the best out of my game against spin. If he can offer that kind of stuff in a coaching capacity, as he did as a senior player, then I think it is really going to benefit us as a group. Really excited to work with him and get him in the environment," Root told reporters on Tuesday.

Pietersen was one of England's leading batsmen during his nine-year international career and played 104 Tests, 136 ODIs and 37 T20Is. His international career came to an acrimonious end in 2014, but he has remained closely involved with the game through broadcasting and coaching and mentoring roles.His return also comes after Pietersen had been publicly critical of England on several occasions, including over their preparation. Root, however, believed Pietersen's willingness to express his

reply to a clip from the podcast Fast Bowling Cartel that is hosted by former Australia fast bowlers Gillespie, Damien Fleming and Glenn McGrath. Gillespie read out Gul's comments before saying: "Give me a spell, Umar. Not surprised you're not bowling coach anymore, champ. How ridiculous is that?" Gillespie said amid laughter from Fleming and McGrath.

"I wasn't making excuses for the weather," said Gul in his reply. "If you heard the full interview, I clearly mentioned that the conditions were cold and I felt our bowlers looked a bit stiff, which affected their ability to execute their bowling plans properly."Gul further said that he was sure that the pacers would acclimatise better in time for the second Test in Lord's and said that, according to him, they did put up a better show. "I'm sure they'll acclimatise to the conditions before the Lord's Test and perform much better. And if you watched the match closely, our bowlers actually did a good job in the conditions," he said.

Gul was assistant coach to Sarfaraz Ahmed and both were sacked, along with an incredible seven players. Among them were senior pros Imam-ul-Haq, who faced accusations of faking an injury during the Lord's Test, Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha, who captained Pakistan in the first Test.

the broadcasters went ahead with it, even if slightly delayed. They later lodged a formal complaint with Sky Sports.Akram also talked about what the situation was like in Pakistan after the interview aired, also adding that he can talk about the situation without getting too into the political and legal side of the issue."There was a bit of uproar here after that. I then read that the Pakistani government came up with how many visits he (Imran) has had, with all the numbers included, with all the phone calls he has had. But, you know, it's difficult to believe, and hard to know what to believe right now," Akram said."I'm OK. As long as I don't get too into the politics or the legal side of things I can speak my mind, nobody will tell me what to do. I'm talking to you now, I'm speaking my mind and this is what's on my mind. I don't want to get involved in politics, I'm not a politician," he added.Akram enjoyed some of the defining moments of his illustrious career under Khan's captaincy. He was a key figure in Pakistan's 1992 World Cup triumph, consistently delivering pace, swing, and crucial breakthroughs in pressure situations. Under Khan, Akram developed into a strike bowler capable of turning matches single-handedly, producing match-winning spells against Australia, India, and the West Indies. Beyond statistics, he has praised Khan's motivational leadership for fostering a fearless approach that helped Pakistan dominate both home and overseas conditions during the late 1980s and early 1990s.Last month, 21 former captains, including Kapil Dev, Sunil Gavaskar and Dilip Vengsarkar, had written to Pakistan Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif about taking steps to improve Khan's health."There's a movement in England and elsewhere (to improve Imran's conditions) but here (in Pakistan)? I'm not so sure. But... I'm speaking from the heart as someone who is worried about him as a person. Convicted or not convicted. Jail or no jail. We need to safeguard his health. We don't know what's happening, the government are saying his health apparently is fine. But I'm worried. I miss him a lot," Akram said.

views is precisely what could make him valuable within the set-up."You want people to give their honest opinion. Why would you get him involved if you didn't want him to tell you what you think? He's very knowledgeable. He's got a very good understanding of batting, in particular, and he's got a huge amount of energy. I think he is going to be great for the group. I am looking forward to getting him involved," Root said.Meanwhile, England head into the final Test against Pakistan amid considerable turmoil in the opposition camp, following a series of changes to their squad and coaching set-up. Root said England were not allowing the developments surrounding Pakistan to distract them from their own preparations."We are just looking after ourselves, to be honest. Trying to get across to the guys that have come into the squad, make sure that they are ready for how they are likely to play, how we can counter that both with bat and ball and look after our own house," Root said."We have had enough to deal with ourselves over the last little while. So just keep preparing well, making sure that we are fresh, ready to go, and we take that confidence forward in the next five days."

India U19 replaces Rohit Yadav over age issue

Hyderabad: The Junior Cricket Committee has named Saurashtra Cricket Association's Aryan Savsani as Rohit Yadav's replacement in India U19's One-Day squad, while Haryana Cricket Association's Tanmay Baloda has been named as his replacement in the Multi-Day squad. Book Walking ToursRohit, who was named in India's U19 squads for the upcoming fixtures against Australia U19 at Rajkot and Ahmedabad, has been withdrawn from the squad due to age-related discrepancies. India U19's updated squad for One-Day matches: Lakshya Raichandani (C), Yashbardhan Chauhan (VC), Rajat Baghel (WK), Aaryavar Sehwal, V.K. Vineet, Kushagra Ojha, Arjun Rajput, Manal Chauhan, Anvay Dravid (WK), V. Yashveer, Shavin Vinodh, Mohit Ulva, Chigurupati Venkata, Kavya Patel, Aryan Savsani Send Money OverseasIndia U19's updated squad for Multi-Day fixtures: Yashbardhan Chauhan (C), Lakshya Raichandani (VC), Sagar Virk, Kushagra Ojha, Manal Chauhan, Kush Patel, Manav Krishna (WK), Abhipray Biswas (WK), Ishan Om, Ayaan Akram, Pranav Ragavendra, Priyanshu Singh, Mohit Ulva, Aryan Yadav, Tanmay Baloda.

‘Shaque’, led by Parineeti Chopra, to release on Netflix on September 24



New Delhi: “Shaque: Trust No One”, featuring actor Parineeti Chopra, is set to release on Netflix on September 24.The project is directed by Rensil D'Silva and is produced by Alchemy Films. It is created by D'Silva and

PM Modi Vadodara event gets 42,000-plus waiting list on BookMyShow

Vadodara: In a first, public participation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme in Vadodara on Tuesday was opened for free registration through the BookMyShow event ticketing platform, with all seats booked within an hour.Modi will lay foundation stones, inaugurate and dedicate to the nation development projects worth more than Rs 35,000 crore in the Gujarat city. He will also address a gathering.In a first-of-its-kind initiative, public participation for Tuesday's prime ministerial programme was opened for free registration through BookMyShow, with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) using the private digital platform to manage registrations, officials said on Monday.The response was overwhelming, with all seats booked within an hour of registration opening, they said.

Registration was subsequently closed, with more than 42,000 applicants placed on the waiting list, reflecting the immense enthusiasm among the public for the programme, officials said.The programme will also feature a fully digital, technology-enabled entry system. Registered participants will receive a digital M-Ticket on their BookMyShow account, carrying a secure, live QR code for entry verification.The entire process, from registration and verification to venue entry and seating, is being managed digitally, with the aim of making access faster and crowd movement smoother.

The prime minister will dedicate to the nation three important sections of the Western Dedicated Freight Cor-

Siddharth P Malhotra and also serves as the series debut for the actor.Chopra shared the news with a post on her Instagram handle on Monday, which featured the poster of the series with the release date over it.“Shaque ki sui chal padi hai, tareekh nazdeek aa rahi hai. Watch ‘Shaque’, out 24 Sept, only on Netflix,” read the caption.

“Shaque’ is a thriller built on uncertainty. What excited me was the opportunity to tell a suspenseful story through the deeply emotional journey of a mother who has spent nine years refusing to give up. I've been fortunate to collaborate with Netflix on this bold, deeply emotional and layered story,” D'Silva said in a statement.“Shaque” also features Jennifer Winget, Tahir Raj Bhasin, and Sumeet Vyas and revolves around a mother's nine-year search for her missing child.Chopra last featured in Imtiaz Ali's “Amar Singh Chamkila”, which released in 2024 and also starred Diljit Dosanjh alongside the actor. She essayed the role of Amarjot Kaur in the film.



ridor (WDFC), covering 326 route kilometres and developed at a cost of more than Rs 20,700 crore. These include the New Sanand (N)-New Makarpura, New Umbergaon-New Saphale and New Saphale-New JNPT sections.The direct connectivity to the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) will facilitate faster movement of EXIM cargo, strengthen links between industrial centres and ports, reduce logistics costs and help decongest Mumbai's railway network.Modi will also flag off freight train services from New Sanand (North), New Makarpura, New Umbergaon and New JNPT, Mumbai. In addition, he will flag off a new passenger train service between Tanda Road and Vadodara (Pratapnagar).He will dedicate to the nation the Jobat-Tanda Road new rail line, developed as part of the Chhota Udepur-Dhar project.

Dia Mirza says clean air is a human right, not a privilege

Mumbai: Actress Dia Mirza is also an environmentalist and often uses social media to share her views on the various issues pertaining to the massive climate change. On Monday, Dia used Clean Air Day to remind all that air pollution is not only an environmental problem, but also a public health crisis.Dia uploaded a video on her IG saying, “Think of a child running onto a football field, a teenager training for a race, children cycling, playing cricket, and simply being outdoors. Every time they run harder, they breathe deeper. In too many parts of our country, that means breathing polluted air into developing lungs and bodies.”

Dia revealed that back in 2021, air pollution resulted in around 2.1 million deaths in India. Not just that, more than 700,000 children under the age of five died due to polluted air across the globe.She further went on to list the people who are worst affected by this declining air quality.“But this burden is not shared equally. Communities living beside highways, landfills, construction sites, factories, and power plants face greater exposure. So do street vendors, traffic police, sanitation workers, and construction workers, people who work outdoors and cannot retreat indoors when the air becomes dangerous. They are on the front lines of polluted earth.”

Dia said that in working towards cleaner air, we also work towards a better environment.“Cleaner energy, reliable, affordable public transport, cleaner industries, no open waste burning, better construction practices, more walking, cycling, and green open spaces. Strong air quality monitoring and accountability when standards are violated,” she continued.Dia reiterated that clear air should not be seen as a privilege but as a human right.“This



International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, let us remember every child deserves to run, play, learn, and grow without their next breath causing harm. Clean air is a high return investment. Clean air is climate action. Clean air is public health. Clean air is a human right”, the actress concluded.

‘Don’t think I can work with Dulquer again’: Aishwarya Lekshmi on King of Kotha’s failure

Despite arriving amid significant hype as one of 2023's biggest Malayalam movies and marking Dulquer Salmaan's first theatrical release on his home turf in almost two years since Kurup (2021), director Abhilash Joshiy's King of Kotha became a critical and commercial failure. Not only did the movie flop, but it also drew significant trolling towards the cast and crew, particularly Dulquer Salmaan and Aishwarya Lakshmi, who played the lead roles.Recently, Aishwarya admitted that the King of Kotha debacle affected her significantly, resulting in fewer opportunities for her in Malayalam cinema. She said filmmakers in the industry grew sceptical about casting her in the aftermath, and the trolling reached such high levels that she even lost confidence in working with Dulquer again.How King of Kotha debacle affected Aishwarya's careerAishwarya Lakshmi revealed that she once even turned down a commercial where she was supposed to appear alongside Dulquer because she felt the brand would suffer if people once again trolled their pairing.“King of Kotha came amid huge hype in 2023. But after that, it felt like the Malayalam industry was afraid to cast me anymore. Not just me; Dulquer and the film's crew also faced trolls. My acting and dialogue delivery were all trolled. But many times, I have also felt that what they say is right,” Aishwarya reportedly shared during a conversation with

renowned television presenter Ranjini Haridas on the latter's YouTube channel.'Mocked on sets': Aishwarya recalls getting trolled for 'Rajuvetta' line“Many people made fun of me for the way I called Dulquer 'Rajuvetta' in the film. It hurt me deeply when an assistant director (AD) called me that and made fun of me during the shooting of Hello Mummy (2024). Like that, many things happened,” she said.Aishwarya further recalled, “After that, I had an ad shoot coming up with Dulquer. But I told the team, ‘The repercussions have been terrible; it will be trouble for you.’ I don't think I can work with Dulquer anymore. Such trolls have affected me that much.”King of Kotha budget and box office collectionAlso starring Shabeer Kallarakkal, Prasanna, Gokul Suresh, Nyla Usha, and Chemban Vinod Jose, King of Kotha marked the directorial debut of Abhilash Joshiy, the son of legendary Malayalam filmmaker Joshiy. Mounted on a reported budget of Rs 50 crore, King of Kotha grossed just Rs 31.35 crore globally, according to industry tracker Sacnilk.Aishwarya Lakshmi made her acting debut in director Althaf Salim's Njandukalude Nattil Oridavela (2017), where she starred alongside Nivin Pauly. She has since appeared in movies such as Mayaanadhi (2017), Varathan (2018), Vijay Superum Pouramiyum (2019), Kaanekkaane (2021), Jagame Thandhiram (2021), Ponniyin Selvan: I (2022), Kumari (2022), Gatta Kusthi (2022),

Ram Gopal Varma says AI is ‘erasing our minds’, warns of jobs disappearing



Mumbai: Maverick filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma has drawn a parallel with the Industrial Revolution, which replaced several physical jobs, and said that artificial intelligence is now beginning to “erase” jobs that require human thinking and creativity.Taking to X, formerly called Twitter, the filmmaker wrote: “With AI, the first jobs to vanish will be of those who immediately don't embrace it. Technology has always been designed for our convenience, to save us from physical hardships and to save our time from wasting it on mundane tasks...(sic).”

“We all wish for more and more free time, and now our wish is coming true with AI freeing us for all time and most probably forever. We as humans had two assets .. one the muscle with which we perform tasks, and the mind we use to think and create.”Drawing the parallel, he wrote:

‘You are a Muslim’: Censor stopped Dilip Kumar from saying ‘Hey Ram’ until Nehru stepped in

Filmmaker Tigmanshu Dhulia recently spoke about the history of censorship in Indian cinema and how filmmakers have negotiated political restrictions—from the freedom struggle to his own experience with Raag Desh.Speaking at an event organised by The Wire on the “State of Media and Film Industry”, Dhulia said filmmakers during the freedom movement were able to convey political messages through their films in ways that often escaped the British authorities.

“When the freedom struggle was going on, our filmmakers made films in such subtle ways that the British could not understand what was really happening. Society was different then,” he said.He cited Chal Chal Re Naujawan, directed by Gyan Mukherjee, as an example. The 1944 film had Saadat Hasan Manto as one of its writers and music by Ghulam Haider, and starred Ashok Kumar.“There was such a cosmopolitan culture. The British could not understand what was going on,” Dhulia said.The hidden message in Kismet songHe then recalled Kismet, the 1943 Ashok Kumar-starrer, which featured the popular patriotic song “Door Hato Ae Duniya Walon, Hindustan Hamara Hai”.“The Second World War was going on. The British thought the song was against the Japanese because Japan had attacked Burma from the east. They did not understand that the song was actually directed at them. Films were advancing politics in this way.”Dhulia said the relationship between filmmakers, the government and political dissent remained complicated even after Independence.He recalled the case of actor Balraj Sahni, who was arrested while Hulchul was being made in the early 1950s. Sahni, who was associated with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), played a jailer in the film.“Balraj Sahni was giving a speech and he was arrested and put in jail in Mumbai,” Dhulia said.The arrest created a problem for producer K. Asif because the film's set was already built and Sahni's absence could cause financial losses.“Asif went to the Governor. Look at the leniency of the government at that time. They told Balraj Sahni that his nine o'clock morning shift would be allowed. He would leave jail, go to the set and return in the evening. So Balraj Sahni would leave jail every morning, go to the set, wear the jailer's costume, act and then return to jail in the evening. That was the society we lived in,” Dhulia said.

When the censor board objected to ‘Hey Ram’He also recalled the controversy around Dilip Kumar's Ganga Jamuna and the censor board's objection to a line in which Kumar's character says “Hey Ram” while dying.“The censor board stopped the film and gave a very strange reason. They said, ‘How can you say Hey Ram? You are a Muslim.’”Dhulia said the makers gave the argument that Dilip Kumar was playing a Hindu character named Ganga.“The argument was, ‘The character's name in the

“The Industrial Revolution started erasing physical jobs and now A I is erasing our minds ..Soon we will not have both and that's nothing but our most ardent wish coming true Edward Abbey in W. W. Jacobs's ‘The Monkey's Paw’ warned us about this‘Beware of what you wish for.. it might come true’. It did (sic).”

RGV has directed films across multiple genres. He is popular for having gritty realism, technical finesse in his cinema. Varma is tagged as one of the pioneers of new-age Indian cinema.He is currently busy with ‘Police Station Mein Bhoot’ starring Manoj BajpayeeSpeaking about the cast of “Police Station Mein Bhoot,” the film also stars Genelia Deshmukh as the female lead.He is simultaneously working on “Police Company” starring Harshvardhan Rane. The film was announced last month.RGV had then shared on X that the film's tag line is ‘It Is More Dangerous Than D Company’.“The police is an institution, and an underworld company is a money making organisation.. But when an institution is given extra powers, it will soon become a company.”“After DAWOOD IBRAHIM brutally finished most of his rival gangs, he grew his GANG into a COMPANY and then left for DUBAI leaving his protégée CHOTA RAJAN to head the operations of D COMPANY. Subsequently a chain of events led to a split between Dawood and Rajan , which in turn caused a vacuum in the Mumbai underworld (sic).”RGV went on to say that the film “Police Company” is story inspired from that “SQUAD based on one of its team members DAYA NAYAK which is being played by HARSH VARDHAN RANE ..The film has a huge ensemble cast , the details of which will be revealed soon.”



film is Ganga. He is a Hindu. He can Hey Ram.’ But the censor board did not agree.”According to Dhulia, the matter eventually reached Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who watched the film and said there was no problem with it.“But then there was another issue. If all the other films stuck with the censor were not passed, people would say Dilip Kumar got his film passed because he knew the Prime Minister. So all the other films were cleared as well,” Dhulia said.Dhulia then compared those experiences with his own encounter with censorship while making Raag Desh in 2017. The film, presented by Rajya Sabha TV, was based on the Indian National Army trials and featured the cases of INA officers at the Red Fort.He said, “When a film goes to the censor board, the director has to be present. When I showed Raag Desh, the censor board members hugged me. They did not ask for a single cut. I had made the film after doing a lot of research. The censor board actually hugged me and said, ‘What a film you have made.’”After that, the film was stopped,” he said.Dhulia said he also faced a long wait for his payment.“I did not get my money either. I got it six or seven years later. I had to plead with people here and there.”Talking about the release Dhulia said, “The film was released in a hurry. They could have aired it on Doordarshan, but to this day, they haven't put it out anywhere.”

Bhuvan Bam stopped shooting BB Ki Vines indoors after losing parents

Bhuvan Bam, who is gearing up for his upcoming series The Revolutionaries, opened up about a deeply personal chapter of his life. In a recent interaction with Nayandeep Rakshit, the YouTube-turned-actor spoke about why he no longer spends much time at home, his decision to move away from creating ‘BB Ki Vines’ videos indoors, and how humour has become his way of coping with the loss of his parents.

Why Bhuvan Bam no longer shoots BB Ki Vines at homeBhuvan reflected on his journey from YouTube to acting, saying that while he has moved on from regularly creating content for his channel, he can never forget what “BB Ki Vines” gave him. He also said that the characters he created over the years would “never die” and would forever remain “immortal.”When asked if he had forgotten YouTube, Bhuvan Bam dismissed the idea, saying there was no reason for him to distance himself from the platform that shaped his career. “People say, ‘You have forgotten YouTube.’ Aisa ho hi nahi sakta na (This is impossible). Why would I forget something that gave me this career, that I am sitting with you and I am working under Sir (Nikkhil Advani)? Why would I forget something like that? It's just that I don't want to be in that char deewari (four walls) because it reminds me of home,” Bhuvan said.Having lost both his parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bhuvan said that being inside the four walls of his home brings back memories he finds difficult to revisit. Since his BB Ki Vines videos were largely shot indoors, he has chosen not to create them in the same way anymore.Bhuvan admitted that humour has gradually be-



come a shield for him and a way of escaping difficult thoughts. He said he began finding humour even in tragedy because dwelling on the past often brings back the darkest moments of one's life. It so happened that I started finding humour in tragedy because when you sit idle and you look at life, you will only remember the worst times of your life. How do you cope with that? You need someone to speak to, you need something to look at and laugh at,” said the Dhindhora actor.For Bhuvan, humour has also allowed him to connect with people who may be going through difficult phases of their own.