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Anant Nag honoured with Dadasaheb Phalke Award at 72nd National Film Awards

New Delhi, Sept22

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday presented the 72nd National Film Awards at a ceremony held against the backdrop of the Statue of Unity, urging filmmakers to create meaningful cinema and calling for greater representation of women on award juries.



Ashwin's sci-fi epic Kalki 2898 AD was named Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

Rajkumar Periasamy won the Best Director award for the Tamil film Amaran, while the Telugu film 35: Chinna Katha Kaadu was adjudged Best Children's Film.

The Best Actor award was shared by Mammooty for Bramayugam and Kartik Aaryan for Chandu Champion. Yami Gautam won the Best Actress award for her performance in Article 370.

Sanjay Mishra was named Best Supporting Actor for Bhakshak, while the Best Supporting Actress award was shared by Sachana Namidass for Maharaja and Ropashree Varkady for Mithya.

Receiving his first National Film Award, Kartik Aaryan described the honour as a significant milestone in his artistic journey and expressed gratitude for the recognition.

Expressing satisfaction over the number of women among the winners, the President said she would like to see more women serving on award juries as well. She also encouraged the film industry to focus on socially relevant and responsible storytelling.

"I am happy to see many women winners today. I would also love to see more women as part of the jury. The country's cinema industry is vibrant to the core. I request members of the industry to make meaningful films carrying good messages. Star wahi hai jo ujala phailaye (a true star is one who spreads light)," she said.

Veteran actor Anant Nag was conferred the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his outstanding contribution to Indian cinema spanning more than five decades.

In the feature film category, Article 370 won the Swarna Kamal for Best Feature Film. Actor-filmmaker Randeep Hooda received the Best Debut Director award for Swatantrya Veer Savarkar, while Nag

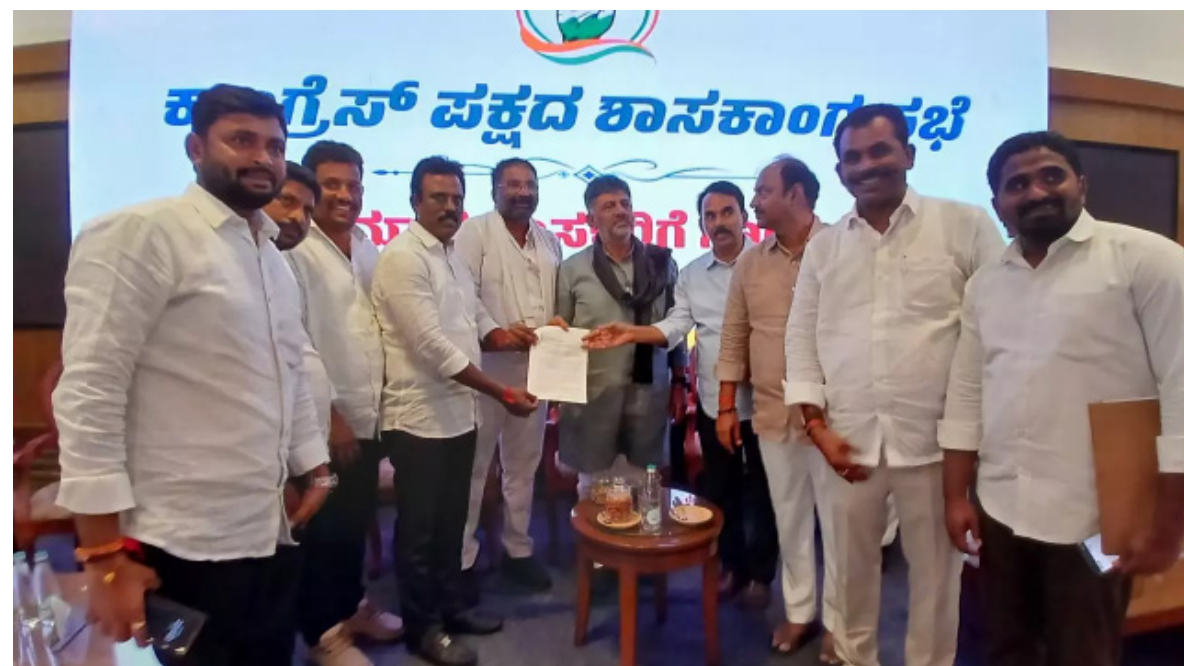
tion.

Addressing the gathering, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw congratulated the award winners and acknowledged the contributions of technicians, cinematographers and other behind-the-scenes professionals to the success of Indian cinema.

He also congratulated Anant Nag on receiving the Dadasaheb Phalke Award and lauded his contribution to the film industry over more than five decades.

Vaishnaw said the decision to hold the National Film Awards at different tourist destinations across the country was inspired by India's G20 presidency, during which more than 200 meetings were organised in over 60 cities.

Inviting wider participation, he urged states and Union Territories to identify prominent tourist destinations that could host future editions of the National Film Awards.



Telangana Seeks Krishna Water From Karnataka

Hyderabad: , Sept22

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday requested his Karnataka counterpart D.K. Shivakumar for release of water from its Narayanpur dam to help Telangana cope with severe shortage of water in the river. Revanth Reddy, along with irrigation minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, had a conversation with Shivakumar in the afternoon, following which a team of five from Telangana, including two ministers and three MLAs, went to Bengaluru to meet Shivakumar and present the request in person.

The team comprised ministers Jupally Krishna Rao, Vakiti Srihari, and Congress MLAs T. Megha Reddy, and G. Madhusudhan Reddy, along with Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy who won on a BRS ticket but later aligned with the Congress. They met with Shivakumar late in the night and explained Telangana's needs and the present conditions that warranted the request for release of water.

Earlier, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that additional flows in Krishna, if Karnataka released water from Narayanpur as requested, would reach Jurala and pro-

vide relief to farmers whose standing crops were under stress. He said the state government was making every possible effort to protect standing crops, while at the same time ensuring that water releases for irrigation were calibrated to maintain drinking-water security if the dry conditions continue.

Meanwhile, the Telangana team which met Shivakumar, in a letter sought a sustained release of 5,000 cusecs of water from Krishna for one month — which amounts to around 13 tmc ft — saying that nearly 5.5 lakh acres of standing crops required irrigation in southern Telangana under the Jurala, Bhima, Jawahar Nettekpadu and Koilsagar lift irrigation schemes.

The letter said Karnataka should consider Telangana's request "in the spirit of cooperation" between the two states. They said the standing crops might suffer even due to "a temporary shortfall in water availability" which in turn could impact the incomes and livelihoods of farmers in the affected areas in Telangana.

Pay compensation to SC, ST sexual assault victims: Telangana CM

Hyderabad:Sept 22

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Tuesday, September 22, instructed officials to release funds through the 'green channel' to pay compensation to victims of sexual assault. He stated that the government was responding to incidents of sexual assault on humanitarian grounds.

The CM took the decision during a meeting of the State-level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee on the implementation of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. "Perhaps, for the first time after the formation of the Telangana state, the State-level High-Power Vigilance and Monitoring Committee meeting on the Act was held under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister. The Committee reviewed the implementation of the Act, cases registered, investigation, trial proceedings, case resolution, and the assistance and rehabilitation provided to victims till date," said a press release from Revanth Reddy's office.

The Telangana CM also said that numerous

welfare schemes have also been launched in the state to uplift the SC and ST communities, including providing fine rice and nutritious food to the Dalit and



tribal groups. He stated that Dalits constituted 31 per cent of the total beneficiaries of Indiramma houses, and that 17 percent of the same were sanctioned to Scheduled Tribe community embers. "The government was also providing breakfast to 27.5 lakh students across the state, from nursery to the 12th grade," he said.

Cabinet to Meet on Oct 1, Metro Takeover Funds and Indiramma on Agenda

From Our Staff Reporter

Hyderabad:, Sept22

The Cabinet will meet on October 1 amid expectations of key decisions on the mobilisation of funds for the takeover of Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-I from L&T, as well as on the distribution of Indiramma saris to one crore women ahead of the Bathukamma festival from October 11 to 18, official sources said on Tuesday.

The Cabinet is likely to discuss the modalities and timeline for the sari distribution.

Last year, the government had distributed the Indiramma saris from November 19, birth anniversary of former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

The distribution may be advanced in view of the festival being celebrated next month.

The Cabinet is also expected to discuss the future course of action on the long-delayed takeover of Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-I from L&T, which is considered crucial for facilitating the expansion of Metro Rail under Phase-II.

The takeover of L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Ltd. has run into further delay as the state government is yet to finalise the debt funding required for the transaction.

The takeover was initially expected to be completed by September-end, but the government is now likely to seek a further three-month extension.

In April, the Telangana government, through Hyderabad Metro Rail Ltd., signed a share purchase agreement with L&T Metro Rail to take over the Hyderabad Metro project.

Under the agreement, the state government agency has to pay around ₹14,600 crore to L&T Metro Rail towards acquisition of its equity in the project.

It has also agreed to take over the existing debt of around ₹13,600 crore by refinancing it through a fresh loan agreement with financial institutions.

SBI Capital Markets, which is advising the state



government on mobilising funds for the takeover, is yet to finalise the financing arrangement. Indian Railway Finance Corporation Ltd (IRFC), which had initially agreed to fund the transaction, has raised objections to certain aspects of the proposed funding structure, resulting in further delay.

Under the original share purchase agreement, the takeover was to be completed by June. However, owing to the delay in finalising the debt agreement with financial institutions, the deadline was extended to September 30.

With the revised deadline approaching, the state government is expected to seek another three-month extension from L&T, potentially extending the deadline to December 31.

Revanth Reddy directs officials to remain alert after heavy rains in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: , Sept22

Following heavy rains in Hyderabad on Tuesday evening, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the official machinery to remain alert.

The Chief Minister instructed the Commission-

ation constantly.

Officials were ordered to take immediate measures to prevent waterlogging on main roads, junctions and in residential colonies. Required personnel and machinery should be deployed promptly in waterlogged areas, he said.

The Chief Minister also instructed the Energy Department to ensure there were no power outages. The Traffic Police wing was directed to take proactive measures to prevent traffic congestion.

Revanth Reddy suggested paying special attention to low-lying areas and colonies prone to flooding. Special teams should be pressed into service to clear obstructions to the flow of water in drains and storm-water channels. Rescue teams should remain ready for immediate response during emergencies, and control rooms should remain vigilant, he ordered.

"Officials must be available on the ground to monitor the situation. Take all necessary measures and ensure people do not face any inconvenience," Revanth Reddy said.



ers of the three Municipal Corporations in the Greater Hyderabad region, HYDRAB and Police Commissioners to work in coordination and monitor the situ-

EDITORIAL
EYE SECRETS

Telangana's revenue slowdown,
the cost of incomplete projects

Telangana, hailed as one of India's fastest-growing States until 2023-24, is now witnessing a troubling deceleration in revenue growth. After nearly a decade of buoyant fiscal expansion, the post-2023-24 period has experienced a downturn in revenue growth because of inconsistent budget management, particularly in the non-completion and underutilisations of big-ticket projects that were meant to transform the State's economy. The slowdown is not merely a statistical dip; it reflects a deeper disconnect between investment and outcomes, and between expenditure and productivity.

From its formation in 2014 until 2023, Telangana's fiscal trajectory was marked by optimism and rapid expansion. The State's revenue grew at double-digit rates almost every year, peaking at 27.6% in 2021-22. The government's focus on irrigation, industrial infrastructure, and welfare schemes created strong momentum. Projects like Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation, Palamuru-Rangareddy and Sitarama were envisioned as game-changers, designed to irrigate millions of acres, stabilise agriculture and catalyse rural prosperity. Simultaneously, industrial initiatives such as Hyderabad Pharma City and NIMZ Zaheerabad promised to position Telangana as a manufacturing hub. By 2022-23, the State recorded a revenue surplus of Rs 5,994 crore, while its debt-to-GSDP ratio remained manageable. The fiscal optimism was palpable. The transition of government in 2023 marked a critical inflexion point. Revenue growth fell to 6.1% in 2023-24, and by 2024-25, turned negative at -0.76 per cent, despite there being no external shock comparable to the pandemic years. The reasons are multifaceted. Tax shortfalls: GST and property registration collections weakened, reflecting slower economic activity. Borrowing surge: Debt rose by Rs 2.5 lakh crore in just two years, overshooting Budget estimates by 129 per cent. Revenue deficit: The surplus flipped into a deficit of Rs 8,782 crore in 2024-25, worsening beyond Rs 10,000 crore in 2025-26. This fiscal deterioration coincided with the stalling of major projects. The correlation is unmistakable: when capital investments are not allowed to mature into productive assets, the State's revenue base can erode. Telangana's irrigation sector presents the paradox of heavy spending alongside stalled completion. Many projects were at an advanced stage of construction as of March 2023. Twenty major irrigation projects remained incomplete. Their cumulative cost had doubled from Rs 1.02 lakh crore to Rs 2.06 lakh crore, while Rs 1.73 lakh crore had already been spent. Escalating costs increased debt-servicing obligations. Delayed benefits meant no expansion of irrigated area, no rise in agricultural output and no multiplier effect on rural consumption. In essence, the irrigation sector absorbed vast resources but stalled at the fag end of yielding returns—a classic case of fiscal leakage through incomplete capital formation. If the Congress government in Telangana had accelerated irrigation works after 2023, most major projects could have been completed by 2027-28 with an additional fiscal outlay of only about Rs 40,000 crore. Completion would have unlocked irrigation potential for millions of acres, boosting agriculture, agro-industries, and GST inflows. Telangana could have achieved a fiscal turnaround by 2027-28, with irrigation acting as a growth engine. Instead, delays have converted projects into fiscal liabilities. The industrial story is equally sobering. Hyderabad Pharma City, NIMZ Zaheerabad, and several TSIC industrial parks have faced prolonged delays.

HC revokes special CBI court's
bail order in Rs 40 lakh bribe case



The Bombay High Court on Wednesday set aside an order of a Thane Special CBI Court that had termed the arrests of three accused in an alleged Rs 40 lakh bribery case "illegal" and released them on bail. It also observed that the Sessions Judge passed the order "without application of mind and without perusing the record properly."

The High Court remanded CGST Superintendent Rakesh Kumar Sinha, a private person, and Customs House Agent (CHA) Narinder Rajput to two days of CBI custody for custodial interrogation. It ordered the Investigating Officer (IO) to produce them before the Sessions Judge once their custody ends. In a press release, the agency said it was trying to trace the third accused: Additional Commissioner CGST Vinay Kumar Kantheti, a 2009-batch IRS officer. On August 26, the CBI's Anti-Corruption Branch, Mumbai, registered the case under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act following a complaint by a businessman, who alleged that the CGST Superintendent had demanded a bribe of Rs 1.50 crore in connection with proceedings involving the complainant's firm. The bribe was later negotiated to Rs 40 lakh. The agency laid a trap on August 27 and apprehended Rajput while he was accepting Rs 40 lakh on behalf of Sinha and Kantheti. Later, Sinha and Kantheti were arrested and produced before the Special CBI Court in Thane. A day later, the Thane court termed the arrests "illegal," denied custodial interrogation and ordered their release. A single-judge bench of Justice Shivkumar G Dige on Wednesday allowed CBI's revision application against the Thane court order, which the three accused opposed. The sessions court observed that the investigating officer violated legal provisions by presenting the case diary with loosely arranged papers. It noted that officials prepared arrest memos without ensuring the accused understood or received written grounds for arrest as per procedure. a

Ex-MLA Sujoy Hazra, Sumit Roy
chargesheeted in Salboni land case



Trinamool Congress MLA Sujoy Hazra and Abhishek Banerjee's aide Sumit Roy. The West Bengal Police have submitted its first chargesheet against former Trinamool Congress MLA Sujoy Hazra and Abhishek Banerjee's aide Sumit Roy (right) at the Midnapore court in the Salboni land grab case. The West Bengal Police's Criminal Investigation Department earlier this month submitted its first chargesheet against former Trinamool MLA Sujoy Hazra and TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's personal assistant Sumit Roy at the Midnapore court in the Salboni land grab case, claiming that not only were documents forged but also rubber stamps were found in Hazra's possession.

In the chargesheet, the CID mentioned that rubber stamps of the Block Land and Land Reforms Officer and Block Land and Land Revenue Officer were found. The chargesheet stated that during the investigation, it was found that Sumit Roy made a huge cash deposit worth Rs 7 crore to a particular bank between 2018 and 2021. The CID further claimed that two persons who acted as land brokers — Sujoy Bera and Debasish Dey — have claimed in their statements that Hazra had handed over a substantial portion of the money collected from the alleged illegal land transactions to Sumit Roy. According to the chargesheet, Roy played an important role in the entire racket. Four people have been named as accused in the

first chargesheet — Sujoy Hazra, who is in custody; Anitesh Paira, who is on bail; and Kailash Agarwal and Sarfuddin Khan, both of whom are absconding. The CID has also named 20 witnesses, which include businessmen, local leaders, drivers and land brokers. Furthermore, the CID said that local witnesses Arjun Manta and Anup Tudu have stated that they have seen Hazra and Sumit Roy exchange money. The witnesses have further said that they did not disclose the matter previously as they were afraid. Meanwhile, the CID has been questioning Sumit Roy after taking him into custody. According to CID sources, they are looking for Roy's mobile phone. On Wednesday, the CID took Roy to his residence and searched for his mobile but was unable to recover it. According to CID sources, the mobile phone that they have seized is the one that was recently bought, but his older mobiles were not found at his residence.

The CID suspects that Roy has probably hidden the old mobiles to hide evidence of the proceeds of crime. The CID had arrested Sumit Roy on September 10 from the residence of Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee. On Thursday, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana refused to intervene in the Calcutta High Court's order denying pre-arrest protection, thereby vacating the interim stay on Roy's arrest granted earlier. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta has previously informed the bench that it was necessary to take Roy into custody as he was not cooperating. Sumit Roy had appeared before the CID 11 times and faced 88 hours of interrogation in several cases, out of which nine times he had been summoned in the Salboni land scam. The Calcutta High Court on August 3 rejected Roy's anticipatory bail plea in the alleged government land fraud case being investigated by Salboni police. The case was registered under penal provisions relating to cheating, criminal breach of trust, forgery, use of forged documents and criminal conspiracy.

Why a Siddaramaiah statue has
reopened Karnataka Congress fault lines



A statue of former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah, installed overnight in Kalaburagi while Chief Minister D K Shivakumar was touring the district, has yet again laid bare the factional tensions that have surfaced in the state Congress since the change of guard. The nine-foot statue was installed late Wednesday by Siddaramaiah's supporters near a junction that had earlier been named "Siddaramaiah Circle". The site was along the route Shivakumar was scheduled to take to Afzalpur in Kalaburagi district on Thursday to launch several development projects as part of the Kalyana Karnataka Utsav.

As the installation was carried out without prior permission, officials of the Kalaburagi City Corporation, with assistance from the police, removed the statue by Thursday morning. The episode comes amid growing differences among various factions of the state Congress since Shivakumar took over as CM in June. While the transition of power initially appeared smooth, disagreements over the induction of ministers have highlighted the shifts in the party's internal power equations. Soon after Shivakumar became CM, veteran Congress leader and MLC B K Hariprasad was appointed Karnataka Congress chief. The appointment was viewed within the party as an attempt to prevent the concentration of power in Shivakumar's hands.

Shivakumar-Hariprasad tussle

However, Shivakumar and Hariprasad have since appeared to be at odds on several issues. During the prolonged discussions over Cabinet expansion, Hariprasad said, "Whoever wants power and posts can go with Shivakumar. Those who want to strengthen the Congress and the hand of (Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson) Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, come with me." His remarks came shortly after taking charge as Karnataka Congress chief. Tensions were also reported after Hariprasad was purportedly not invited to an event marking 100 days of the Shivakumar government on September 10. Hariprasad is learnt to have expressed displeasure over the episode within party circles. Shivakumar sought to play down the issue, saying

Top Maoist leader with
Rs 2.2-crore bounty held in Bengal

Asim Mandal. Originating from Paschim Medinipur, Asim Mandal joined the insurgent movement in the 1980s during his student years. In a breakthrough against Left-wing extremism, the Special Task Force (STF) of the Kolkata Police has apprehended high-profile Maoist leader Asim Mandal, alias Akash.

Mandal carried a total bounty of 2.20 crore on his head — comprising Rs 1 crore declared by the Jharkhand government and 1.20 crore by Odisha authorities. Mandal, a Central Committee Member and Secretary of the CPI (Maoist) West Bengal State Committee-I, was tracked down and taken into custody from Purba Medinipur district.

Having operated underground for over 15 years while navigating dense inter-state forest corridors, his capture was enabled by pinpoint technical intelligence gathered by law enforcement agencies. Originating from Paschim Medinipur, Mandal joined the insurgent movement in the 1980s during his student years. He assumed control of the CPI (Maoist) Bengal wing following the death

of senior commander Kishenji in 2011. His capture follows a period of heavy operational pressure on his unit along the West Bengal-Jharkhand border, where key associates, including Regional Committee member Ram Prasad Mardi, were recently captured or forced to surrender amid relentless security operations in the Dalma-Jungle Mahal belt.



A Rs 1.5-crore Delhi heist and
the six 'ordinary' men behind it



They were not hardened criminals. The six men had ordinary jobs: one was an accountant, another a tuition-centre operator, the rest were private-sector employees and gig workers. However, they allegedly came together to plan a Rs 1.5-crore robbery.

On September 7, they allegedly put the plan into action. Around 8 pm that night, three of them, riding a black Splendor motorcycle, intercepted a payment collector/delivery worker and his colleague, who were travelling in an auto-rickshaw. The two men were carrying Rs 3 crore in two bags, with Rs 1.5 crore in each. The cash belonged to a businessman involved in property-related business, police said. When the auto-rickshaw neared the Geeta Colony Flyover on the Outer Ring Road, the men on the bike allegedly displayed pistol-like objects — one of which was later found to be a lighter — and positioned themselves on either side of the two passengers before taking one of the cash bags. They then fled towards ITO, police said. Five members of the group have since been arrested, while the sixth is on the run, police said. Police said Rinku, 27, was the alleged mastermind. A BCom graduate, he had worked as an accountant in Karol Bagh and was familiar with the area from where substantial cash movement took place. He allegedly tasked other members of the group with conducting reconnaissance in and around Chandni Chowk and tracking people suspected of carrying large amounts of cash.

According to Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma, the robbery was allegedly preceded by detailed reconnaissance of cash movement from Chandni Chowk. "The breakthrough came after investigators spent four days analysing CCTV footage, matching the movements of the victims and suspects, and developing technical and field intelligence," said Verma. The investigation indicated that the robbery was not a spur-of-the-moment crime. Police said the accused identified the cash agent and his colleague near the T-Point at Old Delhi Railway Station and tailed them after they boarded the TSR. The plan was to allegedly intercept them at a relatively secluded location and escape immediately after the robbery. Arrests and the alleged roles

Police said the first major breakthrough came with the arrest of Suraj Pandey from Anand Vihar Bus Terminal on September 12, when he was attempting to flee to a remote location in Uttar Pradesh. During questioning, he allegedly disclosed details about the conspiracy and the roles of other members. The next day, police caught two more men, Adarsh Tiwari and Deepak Goswami, from Nawada. Rs 32.5 lakh in cash and a new motorcycle allegedly purchased with the proceeds of the robbery were recovered. The fourth accused, Sandeep, was arrested from Faridabad the same day with Rs 11 lakh allegedly recovered from him. Rinku, the alleged mastermind, was arrested from Ludhiana in Punjab. Rs 37.5 lakh in cash was recovered from him, police said. Police said Sandeep was riding the motorcycle during the robbery, with Suraj seated in the middle and Deepak on the pillion. Deepak allegedly displayed what appeared to be a pistol before the cash bag was taken. Investigators later found that the object was a pistol-shaped lighter, which was recovered during the investigation. Suraj allegedly had Rs 17 lakh in cash and an Apple iPhone purchased with the proceeds of the robbery. After the robbery, the accused allegedly regrouped at a rented room in Nawada, where the money was distributed. Police said Prince, who remains absconding, had allegedly arranged resources for the operation, including the motorcycle and the weapon-like objects. According to police, the five accused had varied backgrounds: Rinku, a B.Com graduate, had worked as an accountant in Karol Bagh-Adarsh, who holds B.Com and B.Ed degrees, had run a tuition centre-Deepak had worked at a mobile shop and in a private company, -Suraj was a Rapido rider who also worked for a private company. In total, police said approximately Rs 1 crore of the robbed cash has been recovered. The other recoveries include the clothes and shoes allegedly worn during the offence, a motorcycle purchased for around Rs 2.10 lakh, a mobile phone purchased with the proceeds of the robbery and the pistol-shaped toy/lighter. Police said the group had allegedly attempted to execute the plan on earlier occasions but was unsuccessful. DCP Central Rohit Rajbir Singh said the investigation focused on reconstructing the movement of the victims and suspects before and after the robbery and identifying the different roles in the alleged conspiracy. Police said further investigation is underway to apprehend Prince, trace the remaining robbed cash, and identify any other persons who may have facilitated or benefited from the offence.

Secunderabad Cantonment
loses open spaces to H-CITI
infrastructure projects

Hyderabad: Secunderabad Cantonment is losing its vital lung spaces, including an iconic football ground at Trimulgherry and a decades-old sports playground, to make way for the infrastructure projects taken up under Hyderabad City Innovative and Transformative Infrastructure (H-CITI). The historic Cantonment Playground at new Bowenpally X Roads is set to be demolished by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) to build the proposed elevated corridor linking Paradise Circle to the ORR Shamirpet on National Highway-44. The development marks the second major blow to the community spaces here, following the partial destruction of the Trimulgherry football ground, which already sacrificed its essential lung space for another elevated corridor running between Gymkhana Grounds and Dairy Farm along State Highway-1 (Rajiv Rahdari) under H-CITI. For decades, both the Bowenpally and Trimulgherry grounds served as favoured spots for the local sports community. These have hosted countless high-stakes tournaments and provided daily practice spaces for football, cricket, and volleyball.

US vows 'economic D-Day' as Iran threatens to halt all oil exports



CAIRO/WASHINGTON, The U.S. threatened Iran with what it called "the greatest ?financial offensive ever marshalled" as it prepared to roll out economic sanctions on Monday that target Iran's trade partners.Iran in turn vowed ?to shut down all oil exports from the Gulf "if the economic war continues."

The Reuters Power Up newsletter by columnist Ron Bousso provides everything you need to know about the global energy industry. Sign up here.U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent will hold a press conference at 1 p.m. EDT (1700 GMT) on Monday amid promises to reveal even more severe measures on a country that has endured near-continuous economic sanctions since the Islamic Revolution of 1979."At dawn begins an economic D-Day — the single greatest financial offensive ?ever marshalled against an adversary," Bessent wrote in an opinion piece published in the Financial Times on Sunday.The warring nations have not conducted military ?strikes against each other for weeks, but they also have not engaged in meaningful talks to end the six-month-old conflict.

Thousands ?of people have died, most of them in Iran and Lebanon, since the U.S. and Israel began strikes on February 28, degrading much of Iran's conventional ?military capacity and inflicting economic pain while killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.But Iran has preserved enough missile and drone capability to attack its Gulf neighbours and threaten oil ?tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, bringing shipping in the key waterway to a near standstill and pressuring world fuel prices.The exact state of Iran's nuclear program, which the Americans and Israelis aim to wipe out, remains unknown.Without detailing specific measures, Bessent signalled the U.S. would target "fearful nations" that prac-

Oil falls as US prepares to unveil new Iran sanctions



SINGAPORE,EMS News Agency, Sept 20 Oil prices slipped more than \$1 a barrel on Monday as investors took profits ?ahead of an expected announcement from Washington about imposing more sanctions on Iran that may further disrupt supplies from the Middle East.Brent crude futures fell \$1.49, or 1.6%, to \$92.90 by 0649 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$85.32 a barrel, down \$1.74, or 2%.

Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here.Both ?contracts posted their second consecutive weekly gains last week, up more than 5%, as peace talks ?between the U.S. and Iran hit a stalemate, capping oil shipments through the Strait of ?Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's supply used to transit.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who is set to ?hold a press conference at 2 p.m. EDT (1800 GMT) on Monday, has threatened to impose "the toughest sanctions in history" ?on Iran. President Donald Trump has

tice "appeasement" by engaging with Iran's economy and financial system."They would do well ?to consider the consequences of sustaining it," he wrote in the Financial Times.Iran has been bracing for the sanctions for days, issuing a series of strongly ?worded statements hinting at a major military response.

Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, on Sunday suggested economic retaliation."If the economic war continues, not a single drop of ?oil will ?be exported, neither through the Strait of Hormuz nor from anywhere in the Persian Gulf," Rezaei wrote in a social media post. "Iran will regard any country's participation in or support for America's economic war against the Iranian people as an act of war."Bessent previously urged China to cooperate with the U.S., noting China historically has received half of its oil imports from the Gulf region. A spokesperson for China's embassy in Washington responded with a statement that "sanctions and pressure do not help resolve ?the problem," while calling for diplomacy.Iran's economy ?was already under pressure from international ?sanctions before the U.S. and Israeli attacks destroyed parts of its infrastructure.

Though Tehran remains outwardly defiant, Iranian officials have warned that further economic punishment could increase hardships, reignite unrest and further erode the Islamic Republic's legitimacy.Iran entered the war with high ?inflation, a weakening currency, energy shortages, sanctions and deep structural weaknesses, and must now contend with damaged infrastructure, disrupted ?trade, lost production and ?the cost of rebuilding.In the absence of official face-to-face talks between the U.S. and Iran, which were last conducted in June in Switzerland, other nations including Qatar, Pakistan and Turkey have attempted to promote diplomacy.Iran said Pakistan's army chief, Asim Munir, will visit Tehran on Monday as part of efforts to restore peace and security in the ?region, but ?gave few details.

Pakistan has been mediating in the conflict and a Pakistani government source said Munir ?would touch on recent developments including the U.S. threat of new sanctions.U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran and Israeli attacks on Lebanon during the war have killed thousands and displaced millions. The U.S. reported 18 military personnel ?killed and more than 750 wounded.Reporting by Yasmine Ghania in Cairo and Kanishka Singh in Washington; Writing by Daniel Trotta; E

also threatened to impose sanctions on Iran's trading partners."Oil slipped after a two-week rally as traders awaited the US plan to economically isolate Iran due later Monday," said Saxo Bank analysts in a note.Iran has condemned U.S. plans ?to announce new sanctions even as President Masoud Pezeshkian called for a diplomatic solution."The more pragmatic members of the ?Iranian leadership would prefer to de-escalate but the hardliners would probably prefer to fight to the bitter end," IG markets analyst ?Tony ?Sycamore said.

"I think by the end of this week we will have a good idea which side of the Iranian leadership has the upper hand."Offers of Iranian crude to Chinese buyers have declined and prices have jumped as the U.S. blockade has cut Tehran's shipments, according to trade sources.However, Iran has granted permission for a number of Iraqi oil ?tankers to pass through ?the Strait of Hormuz ?following repeated requests from Baghdad, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported on Saturday.Some analysts expect the recovery in supplies from the Middle East to take even longer than ?anticipated as the U.S.-Iran conflict persists."Crude (supply) is tightening. Recent weeks have seen one of ?the sharpest declines ?in oil-on-water, whilst onshore inventories are declining as well, including in China," said Morgan Stanley analysts in a note."A reduction in supply is driving this, most notably from the Middle East where several data sources put aggregate exports back ?at March/April ?levels," they said, slowing their assumption for a recovery in Middle ?East supplies.Meanwhile, fewer than 20 commodity vessels transited the Strait of Hormuz at the weekend, shipping data showed on Monday, as Iranian and U.S. ?blockades restrict traffic through the chokepoint for energy shipments.

‘Have heard big words before’: JUI-F chief takes dig at Asim Munir, recalls 1971 Pakistan surrender

Islamabad: Senior Pakistani leader and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has launched a sharp attack on Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, recalling the country's humiliating defeat in the 1971 war against India and warning that prolonged oppression, violence and bloodshed could eventually lead to fresh geographical changes in the region.Addressing a JUI-F convention in Peshawar, Rehman questioned the military establishment's repeated claims of strength and its aggressive posture while pointing to the hardships being faced by ordinary people across the country. Taking a direct swipe at the top military leadership, the JUI-F chief said, "We are the protectors of this country. No one's father can harm this country. I agree, you are very powerful," while questioning whether such assertions of power could protect the country from internal turmoil and growing public distress.Rehman then drew a parallel between the present-day statements of Pakistan's military leadership and the events surrounding the 1971 war with India. He recalled how the Pakistani military had made strong declarations of continuing the fight until the very end before eventually surrendering in Dhaka.The 13-day India-Pakistan war in December 1971 ended with the surrender of around 93,000 Pakistani troops in Dhaka on December 16. The defeat resulted in the collapse of Pakistan's eastern wing and ultimately led to the creation of Bangladesh.

Recalling the statements made by then Pakistan President and military ruler General Yahya Khan shortly before the surrender, Rehman said the establishment had made similarly strong claims in the past but failed to

deliver on those declarations when the situation reached its decisive stage."But I remember, and maybe some elders will too, that in December 1971, one day before laying down arms, General Yahya Khan had addressed the Army and had said, 'We will fight in the streets, deserts, fields, factories, mountains, and we will fight against them. We will fight'. We heard these big words then, too," Rehman said. "Why are you putting the country and the people to the test? Why are you having fun when your public is suffering?" Rehman asked, highlighting what he described as the continuing distress of the Pakistani people.

Referring to the prolonged period of conflict and bloodshed in the region, he said that violence and instability had continued for decades, raising concerns over their possible consequences for the country's future."When the revolution came in Afghanistan in 1989, and the war started... It's been 45-46 years; blood has been flowing for about half a century. When blood flows like this, then it is a sign of geographical changes," the JUI-F chief stated. "If it is a sign of oppression. Then at least inform us of your intentions. We are tolerating it and will continue to tolerate it," Rehman said.Additionally, Rehman has slammed Asim Munir, alleging that powers belonging to Parliament and the federal government have been concentrated in the hands of one individual. "You may be the Army Chief, Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal too — we have no objection to that — but the powers that should belong to Parliament have been handed over to a single individual in the establishment," he said.

Why does it feel like the US and Iran are stuck in an endless conflict loop?



If you feel a sense of déjà vu with the state of the US–Iran war, you're not alone.In recent days, Iran has again demanded the Trump administration lift sanctions on the country, unfreeze Iranian assets and remove its military blockade, in return for Iran opening the Strait of Hormuz. This basically reiterates what the two sides agreed to in a memorandum of understanding in June.US President Donald Trump responded by demanding Iran pay compensation for thousands of US soldiers and Iran's own civilians killed over the past 50 years.

He is also claiming (again) the US has "total control" over the Strait of Hormuz, while Iran maintains the strait will remain closed until the US has met its conditions.With both sides stuck in a rinse-and-repeat cycle in their rhetoric, it seems all the more likely they will again resort to military strikes to try to force the other side to concede. This has been the pattern both have followed since the war began on February 28.

Can this pattern ever be broken, and what would it take?

When Trump feels backed into a corner, he reacts in a predictable way. At least seven times to date, he has threatened mass destruction of Iranian transport, energy infrastructure and even "civilisation". He has then changed tack, calling off military strikes and claiming Iran and the US are getting closer to a deal.The Iranian regime, meanwhile, has switched between engaging in direct diplomatic engagement and negotiations via intermediaries to refusing to engage and ruling out talks.The US has also gone back and forth on its approach to the Strait of Hormuz. Trump announced a naval blockade on Iranian ports on April 13, then doubled down by announcing Operation Project Freedom on May 4 to escort vessels through the strait. That operation was paused only two days later.The US formally lifted the blockade when the two sides reached their deal on June 18 to end the war, but reimposed it when the deal fell apart weeks later.Both sides have since returned to violence, with the US targeting Iranian assets and the Iranian regime striking countries in the region and vessels in the strait. There have been at least 84 incidents involving harm to vessels in the strait from March 1 to August 10.Trump does seem

Egypt, Iran discuss diplomatic efforts to ease regional tensions



Cairo: Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi held a phone call to discuss the latest regional developments and ongoing diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions.Executive Branch

The two ministers discussed efforts to create conditions for a return to diplomacy, including the implementation of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the United States and Iran on June 18, according to a statement from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on Saturday (local time).Abdelatty stressed the importance of intensifying ongoing diplomatic efforts to ease current escalations and reach peaceful understandings that would help restore security and stability in the region, reports Xinhua news agency.

He also underscored the importance of ensuring

Netanyahu vows no return to pre-October 7 status quo in

Jerusalem: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz held a situational assessment on Sunday and warned Hamas of increased targeted strikes if the launch of balloons and kites from the Gaza Strip does not stop.The situational assessment was regarding the threat of drones, balloons and kites launched from the Gaza Strip toward Israel.

The discussion was attended by Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir, the Head of the National Security Council, and senior Israeli Defence Force (IDF) officials."Israel warns Hamas that if the launches toward Israel do not cease immediately, the IDF will act to increase targeted strikes against those responsible for the launches and will evacuate the population from areas used as launch sites for kites, drones, and balloons," the joint statement said."The Prime Minister clarified that there will be no return to the state of affairs prior to October 7. Israel will not allow the Hamas terrorist organisation or any other element in the Gaza Strip to threaten our communities again and compromise our citizens' sense of security," it added.

Tracking Executive Branch Policy ChangesLast week, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office announced that Netanyahu and the Board of Peace have agreed to establish working groups on disarmament and demilitarisation of Gaza."The Prime Minister and Board of Peace had deep and constructive discussions. It was agreed to establish two working groups, one on disarmament and demilitarisation of Gaza, which both Israel and

to want to withdraw the US from the war, and Iran cannot withstand the economic and military pressure indefinitely.

Given this, why do these patterns keep recurring without any progress toward a resolution?

The US will not accept strategic defeatTrump faces two options to break this conflict loop, and neither is good.One option is to accept strategic defeat, lift the US blockade on Iran's ports and withdraw its military assets from the region, leaving Iran in de facto control of the strait.He appeared willing to do this by signing the memorandum of understanding in June. However, after reaching a deal, the Trump administration immediately began encouraging vessels to travel via shipping lanes close to Oman that are not controlled by Iran.

Iran took objection to this, insisting the memorandum gave it control of shipping in the strait. On July 7, the regime targeted vessels travelling the southern "Omani route" through the waterway.The US responded with air strikes, and the conflict cycle kicked off again. It was clear that, despite what was signed in June, the US did not want to accept a strategic defeat that involved giving Iran control over the strait.The US has a second option, but this, too, is not desirable. This would involve serious military escalation involving US boots on the ground in Iran.This could very well break the tit-for-tat conflict cycle and force Iran's hand. But it would also involve high political risk and military costs for the US and the region, which in an election year could be disastrous for Trump and his Republican Party.Iran is focused on regime survival, not peaceOn the Iranian side, the regime is alternating between trying to reach agreement with the US to alleviate the economic stress on the country, and holding onto its main point of leverage: complete control over the Strait of Hormuz.The regime sees this conflict as existential, which is why it is so fixated on controlling the strait and accepting a long war.The new supreme leader of Iran, Mojtaba Khamenei, recently filled six top security and defence positions with hardliners fiercely loyal to the regime, seemingly preparing Iran for a sustained war.This includes the appointment of Mohsen Rezaei, a headline ideologue, as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's central security body.A commander in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) during the long Iran–Iraq war, Rezaei said in April he welcomed a US ground invasion because "we would take thousands of hostages and then for each hostage we would get a billion dollars".Trump expects the Iranian regime to buckle under repeated economic and military pressure, but this only seems to be hardening Iran's resistance. For a regime under strain and unpopular with its own people, focusing on an external threat and a long war may be the surest way to guarantee regime unity and survival.The conflict loop could break if either side is politically and militarily exhausted to the point that ending the war is desirable above all other options. However, that point might still be far away.

the freedom and safety of international navigation and respecting the security and stability of the Gulf states in a way that serves the interests of all peoples in the region.Araghchi briefed Abdelatty on Iran's assessment of recent developments, the course of negotiations, and the challenges facing them, according to the statement.Under the US-Iran MoU, the two sides were scheduled to hold negotiations within a period of 60 days, which ended on Monday, to reach a final agreement. Yet the talks' fate remains unclear following the renewed escalation over the Strait of Hormuz.US President Donald Trump said Wednesday that the United States would launch "the most crushing economic operation ever taken" against Iran.Meanwhile, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf has said that Iran has received "numerous" messages from neighbouring countries about "shaping new security arrangements and economic co-operation" in the region.In a post on social media platform X on Saturday (local time), Qalibaf said the United States "put the security of every single one of its allies at such risk through bullying and pure disregard for their interests for the sake of Israel."

"A homegrown, independent (regional) order is what will actually deliver peace and security," he added.The United States and Israel launched joint airstrikes on Iran on February 28. Tehran responded by launching missiles and drones toward Israel and US military bases in regional countries, reports Xinhua news agency.Media reports, citing regional officials, said Gulf Arab countries were frustrated with Washington for initiating the war while failing to shield them.



the Board of Peace are determined should be prompt and completed before any reconstruction happens in Gaza. A second working group will focus on sanitation, clean water and other public health issues for the people of Gaza, which also impact the people of Israel," the Israeli Prime Minister's office said on social media platform X.On August 5, Netanyahu said that the country will not withdraw its forces from their current positions in Gaza until Hamas is fully disarmed."We are instructing IDF (Israel Defence Forces) soldiers to do whatever is necessary to protect themselves, our territory and our citizens," Netanyahu said in a video released on social media.

What is the One Nation One Subscription explained



The story so far: The Union Cabinet on Monday, November 25, 2024, approved the 'One Nation One Subscription' (ONOS) initiative for centralised access to research articles and journal publication for government higher education institutions and research and development (R&D) laboratories of the central government. The central government has allocated ₹6,000 crore for ONOS until 2027. All higher education institutions under central or State governments and R&D institutions of central government can avail the benefits of the initiative through a national subscription.

What is ONOS?
ONOS is a plan to consolidate researchers' subscriptions to prominent academic journals and other similar publications. Once in place, the ONOS initiative will provide access to journal articles to all individuals in India for one "centrally negotiated payment". The ONOS will replace individual institutional journal subscriptions. Subscriptions to scientific journals are a costly affair. According to research conducted by S. Chakraborty of the National Institute of Plant Genome Research, New Delhi, and other researchers and published in Current Science in April 2020, India spent around ₹1,500 crore on subscription for electronic and print journals in 2018. Institutions also spent around ₹30-50 crore on access to SCOPUS and Web of Science, which are popular citation databases. "One is looking at very large

numbers in terms of financial outlays," the paper noted.
In a response to a query raised in the Lok Sabha in August 2023, Subhas Sarkar, then Minister of State for the Education Ministry, said the Indian government spent around ₹995 crore on journal subscriptions in 2022. This included "the spending by the ten library consortia funded by different ministries/departments and self-subscriptions by individual government academic and R&D institutions". Overall, the total expenditure for 2019-2022 was estimated to be around ₹2,985 crore, Mr. Sarkar said. The ONOS initiative is also expected to include concessions on fees that authors have to pay to have their work published in open access journals. History of the scheme ONOS was recommended as one of the objectives of the Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2020 to facilitate knowledge-sharing on an "equal partnership basis". A plan for ONOS was presented at a stakeholder consultation in August 2021, which was endorsed by the concerned ministries. Another round of negotiations for ONOS took place on October 11-12, and October 25, 2023. The negotiations were held with 41 publishers, which included journals and citation databases, according to the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor. Popular STEM and social science publishers like Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley were a part of the process. In his Lok Sabha response in 2023, Mr. Sarkar said a core committee had been constituted to implement ONOS. This committee consists of a secretary each from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Science and Technology, and a scientific secretary, and will be chaired by the Principal Scientific Advisor of the government of India.

Challenges of implementation The ONOS core committee notified two more blocs for the transition to ONOS: the planning and execution committee (PEC) and the cost negotiation committee (CNC). The PEC includes library consortia coordinators and representatives from government academic and R&D institutions.
The main responsibility of this committee is to prepare a strategy to implement ONOS.

How should India tackle its diabetes load?

The story so far: On International Diabetes Day (November 14), a paper published in The Lancet, based on a global study, recorded over 800 million adults living with diabetes, with more than half not receiving treatment. According to the study, the total number of adults living with either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes in the world has surpassed 800 million — over four times the total number in 1990. Of this, over a quarter (212 million) live in India, with another 148 million in China. The estimate came as a bit of a shock, because the last scientific countrywide estimate by the Indian Council of Medical Research-INDIAB study last year had pegged the number at slightly over 100 million.

Why is there a discrepancy in numbers?
The nub of it is in the means used to measure blood sugar, experts have pointed out. The Lancet study, conducted by the NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), along with the World Health Organization (WHO), used data from over 140 million people (18+ years) culled from more than 1,000 studies in different countries. They estimated trends from 1990 to 2022 in diabetes prevalence and treatment for 200 countries and territories. As such they had to use what was available as data in these nations — picking fasting glucose or HbA1C or a three-month glycated haemoglobin average. The ICMR study, however, used a fasting measure and a two-hour post prandial value to come up with the number of people who have elevated blood sugar levels. It is the use of differing measures to estimate diabetes that has led to the variation. V. Mohan, chairman, Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, Chennai, who was part of the ICMR-INDIAB study says, while a number of countries have moved to measuring HbA1C, India still sticks to the measure of the fasting and two-hour post prandial readings with an Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT) as the gold standard. "If they had taken the OGTT values alone, then the number would be half of what was recorded," he says. "Using HbA1c, they preferred a single cut-off point to determine diabetes — 6.5 %. Even in those with normal glucose, a small percentage will spill over into the 6.5% HbA1c value, depending on whether individuals are 'fast' or 'normal glycaters'. Glycation is influenced by many things, including anaemia, and advancing age. Someone who is nondiabetic too, but is older, may have a high A1C value. In some earlier studies, when we used HbA1C, we found a doubling of the figures," he adds, reasoning out why the OGTT figures are considered the gold standard. However, he adds that a global study the size of what was attempted as part of this exercise would have to use the information already available in countries, and not all nations have OGTT fasting and post prandial values. Anoop Mishra, chairperson, Fortis CDOD Hospital for Diabetes and Allied Sciences, adds that sources of data are multiple here, thereby giving rise to apparent differences in total numbers. Also, he adds that Type 1 diabetics are a small proportion of the total diabetes cases in India, and it is Type 2 diabetes that poses problems for the future.

What are the areas of concern?
Whether 100 million or 200 million, the fact remains that India already has a large number of people requiring treatment for their diabetes, and who, as a consequence are prone to several life-threatening complications involving the heart, eyes, kidneys, and peripheral nervous system. Quibbling over numbers apart, the Lancet study must be seen as yet another reminder that in India, diabetes has grown — and is growing — across populations, and efforts should be made on a warfooting to both prevent diabetes and treat persons with the condition. Another aspect that the study highlighted was the lack of access to treatment for people with diabetes. Senior author of the paper, Majid Ezzati, of the Imperial College, London, says: "Our study highlights widening global inequalities in diabetes, with treatment rates stagnating in many low-and middle-income countries, where numbers of adults with diabetes are drastically increasing. This is especially concerning as people with diabetes tend to be younger in low-income countries, and in the absence of effective treatment, are at risk of life-long complications, including amputation, heart disease, kidney damage or vision loss, or in some cases, premature death." No country in the world can afford to treat patients when the complications of diabetes set in, explains Dr. Mohan. "Even if we assume we have 100 million people with diabetes



and 20% of them move to kidney failure, then that is 20 million people who will need a kidney transplant. How are we going to help all those people?" Dr. Mishra invokes a war metaphor, to stress the urgency of the fight ahead for challenges that might seem, like the labours of Hercules, impossible to achieve and yet only require near superhuman effort. "Unless war-like efforts, using mass media for raising awareness on nutrition, physical activity, are put in, and more legal provisions to cut down carbs and sugar-sweetened beverages, it will be a tall order to keep the numbers from rising," he says. Speaking ahead of World Diabetes Day, International Diabetes Federation Peter Schwarz spoke about prevention as the primary, crucial aspect in this game: "My heart is beating for prevention. And then the next step is prevention, and then prevention again." Dr. Mishra adds that nations such as India have a duty to focus on the vulnerable, lower middle class, semi-urban and rural people. "We have to majority educate women since they are prone to obesity post pregnancy and have a heightened risk at menopause. We need to cut off the rising trend of obesity, [Abdominal obesity has been identified as one of the key causes of diabetes among Indians] with all these efforts. A long-term vision for about 10 years is required," he explains.

What can individuals do?
The Lancet paper identifies obesity and poor diets as important drivers of the rise in Type 2 diabetes rates. Diabetes rate was either already high or increased more in some of the regions where obesity was or became prevalent between 1990 and 2022, compared to many high-income countries, especially those in the Pacific and western Europe, where, in general, obesity and diabetes rates did not rise or rose by a relatively small amount. The writing is on the wall: a measure of mindful eating and exercising have a proven effect in preventing diabetes, and controlling blood sugar levels. The challenge for governments, however, is to make it possible for people to exercise these healthy choices, and for people to demand it of their rulers. As Anjana Ranjit, a collaborator on the ICMR-INDIAB study, says: "We need to see more ambitious policies that restrict unhealthy foods, make healthy foods affordable. Opportunities to exercise must be ensured, besides promoting safe places for walking and exercising, including access to public parks and fitness centres, subsidies provided for healthy foods and free, healthy school meals."

An experience unworthy of the franchise

This year has been a year of experimentation within the real-time strategy genre, with game makers exploring new takes, from the unremarkable Elder Scrolls: Castles to the highly impressive Heroes of History. Joining this lineup is Age of Empires Mobile, developed by TiMi Studio, the team behind Call of Duty Mobile. With TiMi promising a 4X experience aimed at introducing younger generations to the charm of the iconic franchise, fans had high expectations. Unfortunately, the result is a mishmash of game modes, offering little more than a glorified city builder that is weighed down by an endless stream of microtransactions. The heart and soul of Age of Empires (AoE) is unmistakably absent. The game begins with the tale of a holy sword that must be charged, following Princess Josephine on her quest to establish an empire. Right from the opening sequence, the game abandons the classic AoE controls in favor of a dated city-builder system, reminiscent of Clash of Clans.

Why is there a row over climate finance?



The story so far: The 29th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP), arguably the most important of the UN's climate conferences, was scheduled to end on November 22, after 11 days of negotiations, and take a collective step forward in addressing rising carbon emissions. However, deliberations are expected to carry on beyond the deadline with several sticking points outstanding.

What is the significance of COP29?
Going into the talks, developing countries had stated that at least a trillion dollars per year from 2025-35 would be necessary to meet emission targets. This was seen to be the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance which refers to money that will be given to developing countries by developed countries to help the former meet their goals to transition away from the continued use of fossil fuels and curb greenhouse gas emissions. Developing countries have been repeatedly saying that the figure should be "trillions of dollars." To this end, developed countries have mobilised and transferred \$115 billion in 2021-22 — a controversial clause that has yet to be resolved in the universal agreement — but per the Paris Agreement, a new target higher than \$100 billion must be agreed upon by 2025. The talks in Baku were expected to conclusively agree upon a number but there continues to be a sharp split between developed and developing countries on the quantum and other basic aspects of what this NCQG should look like.

What do developing countries want?
This block of countries include China, India and the Group of 77 countries. There are also other coalitions such as the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC), Least Developing Countries (LDC), Small Island Developing Countries (SIDS) etc. Nearly all developing countries fall into one or multiple groupings and while they have differences, they are largely agreed on the point that it is the developed countries that should pay the bulk of climate finance. More importantly, they specified that this money had to be provided not only to help countries meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) but also buffer against existing threats of climate change, and make good for climate damage already wrought. The NDCs are targeted, voluntary plans by all countries to reduce carbon emissions by certain quantities until 2030.

The Hows, Whys and the What Nows

Now that the Byju's chapter has come to a sad close with the founder himself declaring that the company is worthless, it is time to examine what went wrong with juggernaut ? What does this teacher's journey teach us? Are there any early warning signals to watch for in the future to avoid such episodes from recurring, which leave a lot of employees unemployed, a lot of debts unpaid and several investors a lot poorer?
The damage and repercussions of such big failures are not yet fully understood by the sector but readers must keep in mind that while it might be the most prominent, Byju's is far from alone: many companies in the K12 edtech space have shut shop post pandemic and several have been in a rocky boat including large players like Unacademy and Vedantu. Layoffs have been a daily feature and several companies have been scrambling to keep themselves afloat. As per industry estimates, at least 25 Indian edtech startups, including all seven edtech unicorns, have fired close to 15,000 employees in the last couple of years.

This is a dramatic change from 2020 and 2021 when these very same businesses were the darlings of the media and money was flowing like water into the sector. The more aggressive players went onto a frenzied growth trip and on a shopping spree. But the bubble burst after the pandemic ended and many are now struggling with the new reality. It is worth examining how much of this debacle is self created and how much is outside anyone's control. Are there steps new entrepreneurs can take early in the game to ensure they don't end up the Byju's way or are debacles such as this inevitable? As the pandemic tightened its grip on India and the world in 2020, a lot of the K12 companies stared at a never before opportunity. Here was a country with 250-odd million school going children at home staring at a future ahead with no avenues for learning or entertainment. No matter which segment a company was previously operating in, this was too juicy an opportunity to let go by. A few things happened in combination to set off what we witnessed. The availability of cheap money made it possible so practically everyone entered every possible space and segment available: companies that were specialising in tutoring jumped headlong and with virtually no preparation into test prep or those who were focussed on math and science learning enhancement honed into coding and other fields. Buy, buy, buy became the mantra. In the case of Byju's for instance it bought White Hat Jr., Akash and Great Learning and while the latter two do have value even today, the first was probably not the ideal buy for the company in hindsight. Similar mistakes were made by almost everyone vested in the game. Almost all the players who have been in trouble have three or four factors in common. One, almost all started out with the kernel of a strong idea or proposition, which attracted a lot of easy money that was available at the time. It is the hunger to grow faster that has led some players astray or made them lose focus on their core proposition.

As a result, a chunk of the free cash in the hands of the founders went into securing or buying businesses which they felt could help them achieve a far higher revenue than organic growth would allow. Some of these buys added value and some boomeranged. Several of them were egged on by investors who had little on their mind barring how to quadruple their investment in as short a time frame as possible. Even at the time this frenzy was unfolding, many in the space warned that these good times may not last but these were brushed aside or ignored by those who could only see dollar bills. A large chunk of the money was also spent on indiscriminate hiring with extravagant salary packages, which had little to do with the new recruits previous experience or expertise. Industry representatives and others point out that even as one feels some sympathy for fired employees,

The NCQG, the developing countries say, should also reflect contributions by developed countries on the basis of their historical contribution to existing carbon concentrations in the atmosphere as well as their per capita GDP. To put this in perspective, it is important to note that even if all countries fulfilled their stated voluntary commitments, it would as of now only translate to a 2% cut, and this year — the latest scientific assessments suggest — carbon emissions will likely increase 0.8% over 2023.

What does the developed world say?
However developed countries, led by the European Union, say these demands are unreasonably high. They aver that "all actors" (read countries) should collectively work to hike up climate finance to \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035. While agreeing that they must "take the lead" they have only a set a goal of \$250-300 billion by 2035 per year. Moreover this would consist of a "variety of sources," including "public and private, bilateral and multilateral, and alternative sources." This suggests that another major demand of the developing world, of ensuring most of the money is in the form of grants or low-cost loans, remains unmet.

Have any concrete agreements been made?
A week before the conference began, China had petitioned the Presidency of COP29 to discuss "climate-change related unilateral restrictive trade measures" at the conference. This is an unusual request as trade issues are discussed on forums such as the World Trade Organization. China proposed this as part of a grouping of countries called BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China).

The petition is primarily directed at a European Union proposal called the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposes a tax on products imported into the EU that don't conform to carbon-emission norms required by the Union. The CBAM is currently operating in a "transitional phase" but will come into full effect from January 1, 2026. The first day of the conference saw an agreement on carbon markets to be supervised by the UN. Such a market would allow countries to trade carbon credits — certified reductions of carbon emissions — among themselves and whose prices are determined as a consequence of emission caps imposed by countries. The market itself follows from a section in the Paris Agreement, called Article 6. Sub-sections within the Article spell out how countries can bilaterally trade carbon among themselves (Art 6.2) and participate in a global carbon market (6.4). Though most of the necessary nuts and bolts to make operational such a carbon market, supervised by a United Nations body, were in place since 2022, there were several niggles, particularly on ensuring that the carbon credits generated are genuine and its antecedents are transparent. While there is criticism among environmentalist groups that enough discussions on this didn't take place, this is supposed to be a mechanism to facilitate climate finance.

they too are culpable as many of them left their more stable and perhaps lower paid jobs for the lure of better pay packages and ESOPs even as they knew that the boats they were boarding were rockier and in some cases far less ethical in approach. An almost equally large amount was being spent by these companies on drumming up decibel levels so full page advertisements in dailies, sponsoring events that got them the maximum eyeballs like the IPL and other cricket related event, and videos and short clips on YouTube and other platforms exhorting customers to try their offerings became quite the rage. The fuzzier the business model and weaker the proposition on offer, the higher the amounts squandered on advertising and luring customers. Then, almost all these businesses were losing money, almost like it was going out of fashion. In many cases, the losses were so many multiples of the revenue of the company and many serious players in the sector and external observers were circumspect even back then on how such losses could ever be covered. They never were. An indiscriminate quest for growth led to them spending large amounts on acquiring businesses. Where they couldn't add a new vertical they saw a rival doing well in, these companies bought smaller fish to fill any possible gaps, often at valuations that made little sense. As these companies kept going in for a new series of funding at stratospheric valuations, the promoters or founders fell prey to their own game, began to believe in their own invincibility and felt that they were "too big to fail". Lower revenues, poor returns and other uncomfortable truths were brushed under the carpet with an overriding belief that all these small problems could be fixed at some stage. The hype that had been created around whatever they were offering strengthened this belief. Some external factors too have added to the pain of the K-12 edtech industry. Other than the drying up of easy money, a return to the normal world of physical classes and interaction has made many parents aware of how important social and peer interaction is for any learning to happen. The same is true for tutoring and test prep. This has meant a return to physical classes across segments and many pure online players have ventured into physical classes, albeit belatedly. Another reason why higher ed edtech players don't face the same problems as K-12 is their market reach and accessibility. Many of the players can offer their programmes and courses across the globe with equal ease as syllabus or language barriers are far lower. Players like Simplilearn and Emeritus have 60% and 75% of their present learners overseas. This is also a luxury K12 doesn't enjoy since children typically follow the national curriculums and pedagogies and these vary widely across countries. Even before the pandemic, the value proposition for this segment was weaker since a lot of high quality free content (Khan Academy and similar offerings) is also available, both through a range of government and private platforms. Many experts in the education sector believe that the K12 dilemmas and problems have not been solved effectively by any player in India or globally as yet. Last but not the least, children are by nature more fickle and harder to discipline than those in the age groups that the higher-ed players target. Getting a child hooked and remaining there is a Herculean task as any parent will testify. Word of mouth only takes you so far unlike with an adult who sees his contemporary better his situation after finishing an upskilling course or learning a new one. Neither are children interested in keeping up with the Joneses especially when it comes to learning math nor are they beset with anxieties for the future to the same degree. This ensures that the cost of acquiring and retaining a new learner is much higher for the K12 space.

Can it be avoided in the future?
The bubble that was created in the edtech sector was the sum of many parts and it is unlikely that all the same parts will come together to create a similar situation.

Japanese athletes face room-sharing blunders as well at home Asian Games



With the Asian Games officially set to begin on Saturday with the opening ceremony, athletes landing in Japan for the Games in Aichi and Nagoya have been grumbling about organisational chaos and the quality of their accommodations. But even the home contingent athletes have not been spared the nightmare, after a report by Reuters claimed that Japanese athletes were being forced to look at alternative arrangements because of instances where male and female athletes were allocated shared rooms. “There have been cases where coaches, team officials, and athletes have been assigned to the same room. There are also situations where room assignments were made purely based on the numbers, such as assigning five twin rooms for a group of five men and five women. While the numbers match on paper, practically ?it creates challenging situations ?such as men and women being assigned together, coaches being assigned with athletes, or trainers who need to accommodate ?a lot of ?medical equipment being assigned together,” Japan’s ?deputy ?Chef de Mission Hisashi Mizutori told a news ?conference in Japan on Thursday.

“We ?are currently working to coordinate and negotiate adjustments wherever possible. For cases where that proves too difficult, we are considering using ?the backup

accommodations that Team Japan prepared in advance as alternatives,” he went on to add.The Games have already seen complaints from athletes from other nations. These include transport from airport being jammed due to computer system failures of not registering names, players having to sleep on the floor at airport after not getting accommodation for hours, and buses ferrying athletes getting lost on the way to the training ground.

The Asian Games will have around 17,000 competitors and officials massing in Japan. The organisers have resorted to creative living arrangements for the visiting contingents rather than have a unified athlete village. An Italian cruise ship, Costa Serena, will ?host 4,000 ?participants and arrived at Nagoya on Tuesday. Another 2,000 athletes and officials will spend their Games living in shipping-container style huts in the dock area of Japan’s biggest port. “Since the cruise ship village opened yesterday (Wednesday), athletes have been arriving and going through the entry procedures,” Mizutori added. “However, the process took a significant amount of time, and due to issues with activation of their credentials, we ?have received reports that some athletes were left waiting for several hours.”The local organising committee (LOC) of Aichi-Nagoya 2026 have blamed the accommodation issues to some sports being added late to the Games program. The organisers were initially expecting about 15,000 ?athletes and officials for the Games.In a joint statement with the Olympic Council ?of Asia (OCA) last week, ?the Aichi-Nagoya ?Asian Games ?Organising Committee said numbers would be capped at 17,000 with all of those guaranteed a place to stay.

Mizutori said the ?Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) had anticipated accommodation “challenges” and had secured ?hotel rooms in the city as a back-up.We heard that the accommodation allocations are extremely tight,” said the former Olympic champion gymnast, who also sits on the JOC ?Executive Board.

India Women’s cricket schedule at Asian Games: Match date, squad, live streaming

Team India will aim to defend their Asian Games gold medal in cricket as they open their campaign in Aichi-Nagoya on Friday, a day before the 20th edition of the continental official gets underway on Saturday in Japan.The Indian women’s cricket team, led by Harmanpreet Kaur, are slated to take on the hosts Japan in their quarter-final match at the Korogi Sports Park in Nisshin. A win will propel them to the semi-final on Sunday, where they are slated to take on Bangladesh, who qualified by virtue of their seeding after the quarter-final match against China was washed out.

India Women’s cricket team for Asian Games 2026: Harmanpreet Kaur (Captain), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-Captain), Shafali Verma, Pratika Rawal, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), G. Kamalini (WK), Bharti Fulmali, Sree Charani, Renuka Thakur, Kranti Gaud, Arundhati Reddy, Shreyanka Patil, Radha Yadav, Nandni Sharma.Harmanpreet’s side are coming fresh off an Asia Cup title win in Dubai last week. The relative match experience featuring their continental rivals will hold the Women in Blue in good stead. India went unbeaten in the tournament, overcoming Pakistan, Thailand and Hong Kong in the group stage. They subsequently thumped Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the semi-finals and final, respectively, to clinch their eighth title across 10 editions.In the previous edition of the Asiad in 2023, India qualified for the semi-finals after a washout against Ma-



laysia in the quarters. They then beat Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in succession to clinch their maiden women’s cricket team gold medal in the Asian Games.India Women – Likely path to Asian Games 2026 goldQuarter-final: India vs Japan – September 18, 2026 – NisshinSemi-final: India vs Bangladesh – September 20, 2026 – NisshinFinal: India vs Pakistan/Sri Lanka/Malaysia – September 22, 2026 – NisshinIndia Women’s Cricket at Asian Games 2026 – When and where to watchThe Indian women’s cricket team’s Asian Games 2026 campaign will be streamed live on the SonyLIV app and website and televised on the Sony Sports Network in India.

Korea, China get chaotic welcome at Asian Games

Nightmarish arrivals is the theme of the Aichi Nagoya Asian Games, as transport delays, system failures and problematic welcomes have sent several contingents scrambling ahead of the Friday opening. The stuttering start includes – buses getting lost, transport from airport jammed due to computer system failures of not registering names, and a Japanese welcome that scandalized Koreans because it included a figure dressed as one of their invaders from 16th century who had tried to take over Korea.The idea of lodging athletes on a cruise ship with a stunning ocean view hasn’t landed too well for Asian Games athletes as the start is littered with chaos. The Korea Times’ Hankookilbo reported that athletes who moved into the cruise ship athletes’ village at Kinjo Pier near Nagoya Port on Wednesday expressed frustration, saying, that though the accommodations are in much better condition than those at the container-based Garden Pier village, they are forced to spend all their time on water, and struggling to access competition venues. At the container village, other athletes got pelted with pouring rain on way to shuttle buses.South Korea’s men’s basketball squad was given container accommodations. Korea Times reported these were particularly cramped, with shared toilets and showers. The Korean ball team averages around 2 meters. KT quoted men’s basketball player Byun Jun-hyung, 30, who called it a “refugee camp” posted from his social media video showing the floor of a bathroom soaked with water from a leak, appealing for help with the words, “Please save us.”The cruise ship village ran into controversy of its own, when upon arrival, the welcome ceremony featured figures portraying Oda Nobunaga, Tokugawa Ieyasu and Toyotomi Hideyoshi — historical figures closely associated with Aichi prefecture. Korean Times reported that the inclusion of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who invaded Joseon Korea during the Imjin War, drew a scandal storm. “His appearance was inconsistent with the international event’s stated spirit of exchange and harmony,” Korea Times wrote. Hideyoshi had invaded Korea to take over the country in 1592 and occupied territory. It led to a stalemate, and then later Hideyoshi just died, after which Japan lost at Battle of Noryang. They argued and negotiated for years later, then settled for peace. At Nagoya 2026, the Koreans weren’t amused to be greeted by the Hideyoshi figure.A mishap involving a shuttle bus carrying athletes, got lost while another reached a wrong destination. South Korean and Qatari national soccer teams ended up at a nearby baseball stadium instead of Mizuho Rugby Stadium, the venue for the football match, as per Chosun. Mizuho Park houses multiple sports facilities, including the main stadium for the opening ceremony of this Asian Games. However, the

baseball stadium the team was taken to does not host any Asian Games events. The baseball events for this tournament are held in a different city within Aichi Prefecture, not in Nagoya. Latwe, with recovery training scheduled on Wednesday 16th, they realised no vehicles were assigned for transportation to the training venue. The team had urgently secured alternative vehicles from the morning, exhausting their efforts – start of training at 10:30 a.m., saw them arrive only at the venue at 10:50 a.m. Earlier, manager Lee Min-sung and team officials also faced delays in attending a press conference after the assigned vehicle failed to arrive at the accommodation. South Korea have won the last three medals, defeating Japan in finals in last two. The gold is massively important for military service exemptions.Vietnam’s women’s volleyball team was also dropped off at the wrong hotel due to a mistake in directions from the organizing committee. Players and coaching staff lugged their suitcases and equipment under the scorching sun walking a considerable distance to their designated accommodations, reported Hankook Ilbo.The Aichi Sky Expo, a venue next to Chubu Centrair International Airport, of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, became a mass of stranded passengers as arriving delegations waited hours for transfers to their official accommodation, reported Xinhua. The on-site system failed to find information for a large number of athletes, the piece reported, leaving them unable to board the pre-arranged shuttle buses. Only two of the 21 members of China’s gymnastics team could be found in the on-site system, according to a delegation member, leaving the entire team stranded. The exhausted athletes used the downtime to train, laying out yoga mats to stay warmed up.When Kazakhstan’s shooting team waited more than two hours for transport, more chaos ensued. “Many parts of the workflow are not connected. Teams can arrange private transport if they want, but they have to cover the costs themselves,” a volunteer was quoted as saying by Xinhua. Warned of the chaos, China’s badminton team tried to take public airport buses but could not get enough tickets for everyone. Some athletes left separately while the rest stayed behind. The remaining badminton players were helped by staff from the Chinese Consulate General in Nagoya, who arranged chartered vehicles through local overseas Chinese contacts, as per Xinhua. The full team finally left after four hours.Chinese members of the table tennis, wushu and rowing teams waited 5-6 hours after arriving, as per Chinese media. A Sri Lankan delegation told Xinhua, the team’s total travel and waiting time had stretched to 24 hours since leaving home. Only drinking water was available at training venues, as per Chinese media, with no food available. “These off-field troubles are harder to endure than the competitions themselves,” a fatigued athlete told Xinhua.T

Why China were knocked out of Asian Games cricket even before a ball was bowled



Asian Games cricket: China were knocked out without a ball being bowled in the quarter-final on Wednesday. (X)Asian Games cricket: China were knocked out without a ball being bowled in the quarter-final on Wednesday. (X)Two days before the official opening of the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, the Chinese women’s cricket team faced an agonising exit without even taking the field.

The opening quarter-final fixture of the women’s T20I cricket event between China and Bangladesh was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to inclement weather around the Korogi Sports Park in Nisshin.Heavy weather had plagued Korogi Sports Park on the outskirts of Nagoya all week, culminating in a total cancellation of play on Thursday morning, proving costly for the Chinese side, making their third Asiad appearance since 2010.

What’s in a hockey stick: Change in material & technology make big difference

A few weeks back, top Indian drag-flicker Jugraj Singh had a specific request for his hockey stick manufacturer. He wanted another layer of paint or primer on his stick, especially near the area from where he drags the ball during penalty corners.This is one of the recent changes hockey sticks have seen in their constant evolution from wooden to carbon fibre.“Jugraj had asked us to add a layer of paint to his stick. This is something new that drag flickers across the world have been doing,” said Jitin Mahajan, the second-generation hockey stick maker and the owner of the brand ‘Alfa’.

Explaining the change, hockey broadcaster and coach Siddharth Pandey said, “When the stick comes out of a manufacturing unit, the surface is very smooth and there’s no control on it. The white paint adds a layer of friction between the stick and the ball. That allows the stick that much more grip on the ball to execute the drag-flick.”From the days of wood to the modern-day carbon fibre, hockey sticks have often been used as magic wands by wizards of the game with the greats often having their tool made according to their own precise specifications.It’s part of hockey lore that Dhyan Chand’s extraordinary dribbling skills gave rise to rumours that he had a magnet in his stick to help him in ball control.

The hockey sticks are constantly modified for the specific requirements of their users. (HI) The hockey sticks are constantly modified for the specific requirements of their users. (HI)“The value of a good hockey stick is immense. You can ask a hockey player to change anything but they are very particular about their sticks,” Mahajan said.

Different stick, different specificationsAs the game has moved with the times, hockey sticks have evolved according to the requirements of their users.“Almost everyone in the Indian national team plays with our sticks. But we can’t manufacture the sticks for the whole team in one go. Each stick takes time as there are exact specifications from the players,” Mahajan said. “For example, forward Abhishek asks for a low bow and more weight on the lower side of the stick as it helps in generating power while taking a shot.”Pandey explained the different bends in a hockey stick.“The bow is basically the bend on the stick. A low bow means the stick has a bend at its lowest end, allowing the player to perform 3D skills, pickups, back-flicks, aerials, and have more power,” he said. “For midfielders, there is a pro bow somewhere in the middle of the stick. It’s not very pronounced but allows more control and accuracy while passing.”

The hockey sticks are constantly modified for the specific requirements of their users.“Indian defenders usually receive aerial balls or have to scoop it up. So some

How did Bangladesh qualify over China?

Nigar Sultana’s Bangladesh, therefore, advanced to the semi-final stage over China despite an abandoned game. According to the Asian Games cricket Playing Conditions, rule 16.10.2 (b) states that the higher-ranked side will advance in the event of a washout.The rule also came into effect in the 2023 edition, with three of the four quarter-finals involving India, Pakistan and Bangladesh being washed out.Pakistan are scheduled to play Thailand at the same venue in Thursday’s second quarter-final fixture.The defeat ends China’s campaign in cricket, with the men’s team not being a part of the eight-nation line-up for the tournament.All cricket matches at the Games will be played at the same venue. Bangladesh will now likely face India in the women’s semi-finals. Harmanpreet Kaur’s side will clash with hosts Japan in their quarter-final in Nisshin on Friday.Both semi-finals will be played on Sunday, with the gold medal match scheduled to be held on September 22.The Indian men’s team are also scheduled to play Japan in their first bilateral match at the Sano International Cricket Ground, about 100 kilometres from Tokyo, on September 22. Team India led by Shreyas Iyer will face the Japan team captained by Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming in the T20 International.The match is part of the celebrations to mark 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in July, the two sides had announced 2027 as the ‘India-Japan Year of Shared Horizons’ to mark the milestone.



extra bend helps them in controlling the ball better,” said Mahajan. “As new skills have developed over the years, such changes have been made to hockey sticks.”From wooden to compositeLike other sports equipment, the hockey stick has also evolved in terms of the material used.“Our family started making hockey sticks back in the 1960s. There has been a constant evolution of the stick through the eras,” said Mahajan, whose brand is the domestic market leader in hockey sticks. “We used to make wooden sticks before but it would take a lot of time. When FIH introduced glass and carbon fibre in the early 2000s, the manufacturing of sticks started moving towards a more modern method.”While Alfa leads the market in India, Pakistan’s Awan Sports dominates the global market with the likes of Adidas, Nike, Osaka, and Grays manufacturing hockey sticks there and exporting their product out of Pakistan.“We were the first to make composite hockey sticks in India. In 2005-2006, we started making hockey sticks from carbon fibre and they were exported too but we stopped due to increasing competition in the international market,” said Raghav Kohli, owner of Shrey Sports, primarily known for making cricket helmets.However, Shrey has restarted making hockey sticks for the past four years. Women’s team player Sakshi Rana, men’s team player Yashdeep Siwach, and British stars Jacob Draper and Sam Taylor are few players using their products.“Hockey is a passion for me and despite stopping it back in 2006, I decided to revive the hockey stick business and we have been growing in the international market,” Kohli said.

What exactly changed when the sticks moved away from wood?

“The game becomes much faster. Wooden sticks wouldn’t last long. Carbon fibre and the resin used to make modern-day sticks is like aviation-grade material. The transfer of ball between players, the execution of skills and the quality of goals have gone to a higher level with the improvement in the sticks,” said Pandey.

Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games hit by accommodation chaos ahead of opening ceremony

Nagoya: Rooms meant for two are being shared by three, complained some Indian athletes lodged at the much-criticised Costa Serena cruise ship for the Asian Games, as even the host nation’s competitors looked for alternative accommodation amid the organisational chaos that has rocked the build-up to the mega-event here.Barely two days before the opening ceremony, local media reports suggested that some Japanese athletes were looking for alternative arrangements after cases emerged of male and female athletes being allocated shared rooms.

“There have been cases where coaches, team officials and athletes have been assigned to the same room. There are also situations where room assignments were made purely based on the numbers, such as assigning five twin rooms for a group of five men and five women,” Japan’s deputy chef de mission Hisashi Mizutori said at a media interaction here.“While the numbers match on paper, practically it creates challenging situations such as men and women being assigned together, coaches being assigned with athletes, or trainers who need to accommodate a lot of medical equipment being assigned together,” he was quoted as saying by The Japan Times.Indian athletes from rowing, wushu and table tennis have already checked in at the Italian cruise ship, which is currently at the centre of media attention. The ship is almost 300 metres long and has 1,500 cabins.

According to one Indian contingent member, three athletes are sharing one room meant for two, and the cramped space is creating inconvenience, though they are not formally complaining.“In some rooms which are meant for only two athletes, three players are staying. The rooms are already small and one additional athlete makes it even more inconvenient. The athletes want to give their best in such a mega event but they are facing this,” a member of the Indian contingent told PTI on condition of

anonymity.“But we are not complaining, we are adjusting to the situation. Food-wise, though, there are no issues.”It is also learnt that some Indian officials have been asked to make their own arrangements. Two members of the rowing team support staff are staying outside as they could not be accommodated at the cruise ship, it is learnt.Some Indian athletes, particularly rowers, were also made to wait for more than 12 hours on Wednesday before they finally got their rooms at the cruise ship just before midnight.“We reached the cruise ship registration area around 9am (on Wednesday), then we waited and waited and finally entered our rooms almost at midnight,” one of the Indian athletes said.Indian contingent’s Chef de Mission Sahdev Yadav told PTI that there was “mismanagement” on the part of the organisers and that the Indian Olympic Association was trying to sort out the issues.“There has been a bit of mismanagement from them (organisers) but we are sorting out the issue. We are working on that,” he said.Thailand team athletes also reportedly slept on the floor at the welcome centre of the cruise ship on Wednesday before managing to check in.Athletes travelling long distances for trainingIn most multi-sport events, basic daily training facilities are available at the Athletes’ Village or nearby areas.But in a bid to cut costs, the Aichi-Nagoya Games organisers have done away with a designated Athletes’ Village.Around 17,000 athletes and officials are being accommodated at various locations, including the cruise ship docked at Nagoya Port, shipping-container-style wooden huts at the dock area of the city and standard hotels across Aichi prefecture.Some athletes are also staying in Tokyo, where a few events are being held.Since there is no designated Athletes’ Village, competitors are travelling long distances for daily training.The rowers have to travel to the Nagaragawa International Regatta Course, which is around 30 km from the cruise ship, for training.

‘Culture is in the heart’: Kriti Sanon breaks silence on Raksha Bandhan ad backlash



Actor Kriti Sanon has hit back at Kangana Ranaut, who earlier criticised her for “wearing a bikini” while celebrating Rakshabandhan in a jewellery ad. Taking to her Instagram Stories, Kriti called out the mindset that continues to measure a woman’s respect for her culture by what she wears. Although she did not mention Kangana by name, she wrote a lengthy note, concluding: “Culture & Traditions are in her heart, not in her neckline!”

Kriti’s note read, “The essence of festivals is not in the clothes you wear, it is in the emotions and meaning

you hold for the traditions. Rakshabandhan is a bond of protection. My sister and I tie rakhi to each other. We know we can protect each other no less than a brother would have.”She added, “We pray for each other’s health, happiness & long life. And for us, this prayer and promise extends to our dogs too! After all, they are family! Also, when will we stop telling women what to wear?? Ethnic fashion has evolved over the years, but still a woman’s respect for her culture is measured with just her clothes!! Culture & Traditions are in her heart, not in her neckline!”It all started when actor-politician Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday said the advertisement felt “intentionally creepy” and questioned why someone would tie a rakhi to their brother while wearing a bikini. She was referring to Kriti Sanon’s new jewellery advertisement, in which the actor was seen wearing an off-white Indo-Western fusion ensemble consisting of a bralette-style blouse, a matching cape, and a draped skirt.Without mentioning Kriti’s name, Kangana wrote, “It is a wonderful time to be a woman, our closets are full of variety of clothes, today’s woman is a global woman, from cocktail dresses to lehenga cholis, jeans to saris, bikinis to salwar kameez. From all the options that are available to us today why would you tie your brother a Rakhi in your bikini/under garments? Where are all your styling options? Ha ha the advert looks intentionally creepy.”Kriti Sanon’s new advertisement had sparked a debate on social media, with several users criticising the actor over her outfit.

Before Rocky Bhai, there was Googly: How Yash went from romantic hero to alpha male

Yash has been three different actors in one career. The first was a romantic hero who made Kannada audiences fall in love with him through films like Googly, Drama and Mr. and Mrs. Ramachari. The second was Rocky Bhai, who made the rest of India fall in line. The third, if the Toxic trailers are any indication, is something neither of the first two would recognise.Before cinema, there was television that was by all means conquered by the actor. His break on the small screen came with Nanda Gokula, a Kannada television serial that became a hit and gave him his first taste of public recognition. It also gave him something else: Radhika Pandit, who was his co-star on the show and would later become his wife. He followed Nanda Gokula with other television work before making the leap to cinema.

Yash’s film career began in 2007 with a supporting role in Priya Hassan’s Jambada Hudugi. His breakthrough came with Moggina Manasu, a romantic drama directed by Shashank, where he played the romantic interest opposite Radhika Pandit. His first title role came with Rocky, a college romance that flopped at the box office. Two more forgettable films followed, Kallara Santhe and Gokula, before he found his footing.

Modalasala, a romantic drama, became his first solo commercial hit and signalled that the audience was willing to give him another chance after the early stumbles. Rajadhani had political undertones but was still built around a love story. Kirataka was an action-romance that gave him his first taste of mass-audience appeal. Then came Drama, directed by Yogaraj Bhat, which paired Yash with Radhika again and became a major hit. The film was a full-blown romantic comedy with humour, music and the kind of easy charm that Yash brought naturally to the screen.Googly, directed by Pawan Wadeyar, was the film that best represented this phase of Yash’s career. A light-hearted romantic comedy, it featured Yash as a carefree, fun-loving young man trying to win over a girl played by Kriti Kharbanda. The film was a box office success and the Googly character became one of the most loved roles of Yash’s pre-KGF career.Yash and Kriti Kharbanda in a still from the movie Googly Yash and Kriti Kharbanda in a still from the movie GooglyThe next few years, he made films like Gajakesari, which pushed him slightly into the action and fantasy space but retained a strong romantic thread. Then came Mr. and Mrs. Ramachari, directed by Santhosh Ananddram, which paired Yash with Radhika

Manoj Bajpayee vouches ‘Ram Gopal Varma is back’ with their film Police Station Mein Bhoot



“It’s a wild film! He’s back, I can tell you that. Ram Gopal Varma is back with Police Station Mein Bhoot. There’s no doubt about it,” says Bajpayee. “And I’m not saying it because I’m a part of the film and have to sell the film. Ramu alone is capable of selling his film. He doesn’t need Manoj Bajpayee for that,” he adds, laughing.

Pandit for the third time. The film was a blockbuster, one of the highest-grossing Kannada films of that year, and its love story felt like a screen version of the couple’s real-life relationship. They were dating by this point, though they would not marry until December 2016.Through this entire stretch, from 2008 to 2016, Yash was Kannada cinema’s most bankable romantic hero. He was the guy audiences went to see when they wanted warmth, charm and a love story that made them feel good. He was not intimidating. He was not intense. He was, by every definition, the boy next door.The transition: Masterpiece to KGFThe first real signal of a shift came with Masterpiece, directed by Manju Mandavya. The film was a commercial entertainer with more action than Yash’s earlier work, and it performed well at the box office. Santhu Straight Forward followed in a similar mould, an action-romance that kept one foot in both camps. But these films were still operating within the Kannada market, and the action was stylised rather than raw.The real pivot was Prashanth Neel. The director, who had previously made Ugramm, a low-budget action film that became a cult hit, approached Yash with the script for KGF. The story of Rocky, a man who rises from the streets of Mumbai to become the king of the Kolar Gold Fields, was unlike anything Yash had done before. It was dark, violent, stylised and built on a mythology of power, dominance and masculinity that had nothing to do with the breezy romantic heroes Yash had been playing for a decade.KGF: Chapter 1 released on December 21, 2018, the same day as Shah Rukh Khan’s Zero. It became the first Kannada film to cross Rs 237 crore worldwide. KGF: Chapter 2, released on April 14, 2022, crossed Rs 1,215 crore, becoming one of the highest-grossing Indian films of all time. The boy next door was gone and in that place stood Rocky Bhai, a character so overwhelming in its intensity that it swallowed the actor’s previous identity whole.The irony of Yash’s transformation is that the very qualities that made him great in romantic comedies are the ones that most of his current audience does not know exist. The lightness, the humour, the warmth, the ability to make a girl blush with a look rather than intimidate a room with a stare, all of that is still in there. You can see it in fleeting moments at press events, in the way he jokes with his co-stars, in the way he talks about his wife Radhika and their children Ayra and Yatharv with a softness that Rocky Bhai would never allow.

Manoj Bajpayee has made a career out of working in films of Ram Gopal Varma. They first worked together in the 1997 adventure comedy Daud, before the actor received a major breakthrough as gangster Bhiku Mhatre in Varma’s 1998 seminal crime drama Satya. They reunited for 1999 psychological thriller Kaun, followed by Varma’s productions — Eeshwar Niwas’ 1999 action drama Shool and Rajat Mukherjee’s 2002 comedy thriller Road.

Manoj Bajpayee, Ram Gopal Varma’s reunion

The last time Bajpayee worked with Varma was in his 2017 political drama threequel Sarkar 3. However, since then, while Bajpayee has carved out his place on streaming with shows like Raj & DK’s espionage thriller The Family Man on Prime Video India, Varma has been undergoing a creative existential crisis. But in an exclusive interview with SCREEN, the actor now vouches that the filmmaker will be back in his form with their next collaboration, horror comedy Police Station Mein Bhoot.“It’s a wild film! He’s back, I can tell you that. Ram Gopal Varma is back with Police Station Mein Bhoot. There’s no doubt about it,” says Bajpayee. “And I’m not saying it because I’m a part of the film and have to sell the film. Ramu alone is capable of selling his film. He doesn’t need Manoj Bajpayee for that,” he adds, laughing.“But what I’ve realized is that Ramu, the kid, is back. He used to be that kid in a candy store when he made all those great films. I don’t know how that happened. Only he’ll be in a position to tell you,” claims the actor. Bajpayee recalls how Varma stopped him from preparing for his role in their upcoming film, in which he plays a police officer.“He knew I was going to go back to my house and start preparing. He told me, ‘Manoj, just do me a favour. Don’t prepare for this film. Just keep in your mind he’s a police guy. Because I’ll be changing a lot of things,’” recounts Bajpayee. He describes every day on set as a “joyride”, but at the same time, full of “extreme hard work”.“I’d get my scenes right before the shot. Then I’d just be finding time, getting a quiet corner on a very noisy set, memorizing and rewriting those lines, sitting with the co-actors to make it really work.

Sonu Nigam postpones Delhi concert amid CJP protests; Prakash Raj hails Sonam Wangchuk



Amid the ongoing Cockroach Janta Party protest over NEET paper leak, singer Sonu Nigam has postponed his concert at the Yashobhoomi Convention Centre in Dwarka, which was scheduled for July 25. The performance was part of his BOSSitivity – Sonu Nigam Remembers Rafi tribute concert series. The tickets for the show are no longer visible on ticketing platforms, while promotional posters have been updated to reflect a new date — August 15.Confirming the postponement, Sonu told

Hindustan Times, “It’s been postponed keeping the current sentiment in mind.”

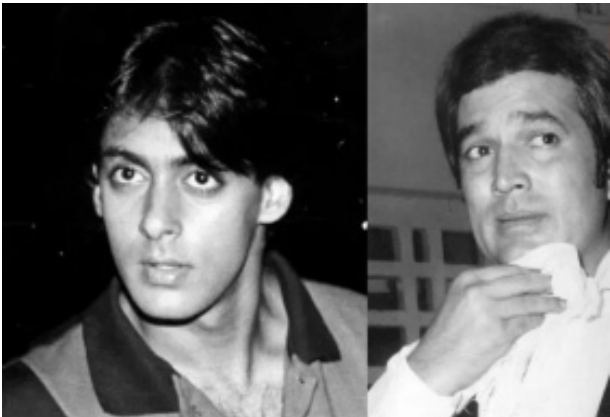
The decision comes a day after a video of Sonu Nigam from a public event went viral, in which he was asked about the ongoing CJP-led student protests. Sonu appeared visibly irritated by the question and abruptly ended the interaction.The singer isn’t the only performer to postpone an event. Comedian-actor Anubhav Singh Bassi has also cancelled his show, which was scheduled for July 25 at Talkatora Stadium.Sharing the update on Instagram Stories, Bassi wrote, “Gen Z is already killing it with creativity and humour right now, so the July 25 show at Talkatora Stadium is cancelled. Karte hain aaram se, dete hain nayi date jaldi hi. Sab ko refund BMS se mil jayega.”Taking to X, Wangchuk wrote, “Just now, in the presence of Union Ministers Shri JP Nadda, Dr Jitendra Singh and senior leaders of the Apex Body of Leh Ladakh, I finally broke my fast after 26 days. Earlier, 65 Members of Parliament from different political parties had visited or signed letters urging me to end my fast. This was done after long negotiations on various conditions and in view of possible violence in the country. I will explain the conditions in detail in a separate video very soon. Meanwhile, I urge you all to stay very vigilant and not allow violence of any kind anywhere.”Actor Prakash Raj, who has been among the most vocal supporters of the CJP-led students protest, shared Wangchuk’s post on X and wrote, “Thank you, Sonam Wangchuk sir, for your sacrifice and for being the conscience of the nation.”The developments come after more than a month of nationwide protests. On Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation, promising a fast-track court to prosecute those involved in the paper leak case and assuring that the issue would be discussed in Parliament next week.

Trisha Krishnan’s mother ‘enjoyed’ Vijay’s Jana Nayagan: ‘We’re going to miss him’

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and actor Vijay’s final film Jana Nayagan hit theatres on Thursday to a mixed response. Among those who attended a special screening of the movie were Vijay’s co-star Trisha Krishnan and her mother Uma Krishnan. Uma’s review of the film has since been grabbing attention on social media.During an interview with ANI, Trisha’s mother revealed that she enjoyed watching Vijay’s film. She added that she was emotional about the actor-politician’s decision to step away from movies. “We had a good time. We really enjoyed the movie. I feel bad that this is his last film. We are going to miss him,” she said.Trisha and Vijay have shared screen space in films like Ghilli, Thirupaachi, Aathi, Kuruvi and Leo. She also made a cameo appearance in Vijay’s 2024 movie The Greatest Of All Time. Apart from their films, Vijay and Trisha have also been making headlines over persistent dating rumours. Their recent public appearances together, along with Trisha’s birthday post for Vijay, have only fuelled further speculation among fans.Jana Nayagan is directed by H. Vinoth and stars Vijay alongside Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Mamitha Baiju, Priyamani, Gautham Vasudev Menon, and Prakash Raj in pivotal roles. The film, produced by K Venkata Narayana’s KVN Productions, hit theatres on July 24 after being delayed by more than six months due to certification issues.



Rajesh Khanna bought star’s ‘lucky’ home; was furious when Salman Khan bid for his Aashirwad



When Rajesh Khanna was alive, he had one dream for Aashirwad, his iconic sea-facing bungalow on Mumbai’s Carter Road. He wanted it to be converted into a museum after his death. After all, Rajesh Khanna wasn’t just another star. He was Hindi cinema’s first superstar, an actor who delivered 15 consecutive hit films—a record that remains unbeaten. Although his unprecedented stardom peaked and faded within a few years, Khanna always believed Aashirwad had changed his destiny. Interestingly, before it became Aashirwad, the bungalow was called Dimple.

The story begins with another superstar of his era, Rajendra Kumar. In the late 1950s, when Rajendra Kumar was still finding his feet in the film industry, he dreamt of owning a bungalow. Around this time, he came across a neglected property on Carter Road. According to journalist Peter John, the bungalow was in such a dilapidated condition that no one was willing to buy it, despite its modest asking price. Rajendra Kumar immediately signed a cheque for Rs 10,000 as a token payment. The bungalow cost Rs 65,000 in total—an enormous amount in those days. He still had to arrange the remaining Rs 55,000.Film star Rajendra Kumar. Express archive photo Film star Rajendra Kumar. Express archive photoln Seema Sonik Alimchand’s biography Jubilee Kumar: The Life and Times of a Superstar, Rajendra Kumar recalled: “Now I had to pay Rs 55,000 more, which I didn’t have in my account. So I went to Mr BR Chopra, who had offered me two films—Dhool Ka Phool and Kanoon. While I had accepted both, we had yet to agree on my remuneration.”The two eventually struck a deal worth Rs 1.75 lakh for both films, with BR Chopra immediately paying him an advance of Rs 50,000. That was enough to complete the purchase. Rajendra Kumar named the bungalow Dimple, after his newborn daughter.The house that became lucky for two superstarsThe bungalow soon proved lucky. Rajendra Kumar’s career soared, earning him the title ‘Jubilee

Kumar’ as film after film celebrated silver jubilees at the box office. At the height of his success, he purchased another bungalow and, once again, named it Dimple. He then decided to sell his Carter Road home. Around the same time, a young actor named Rajesh Khanna was trying to establish himself in Bollywood.

When Khanna learnt that Rajendra Kumar was selling the bungalow, he was eager to buy it. Legend has it that he believed some of Rajendra Kumar’s extraordinary luck would rub off on him. He purchased the property for around Rs 3.5 lakh in the late 1960s. However, there was one condition. Rajendra Kumar requested him not to retain the name Dimple, since it was his daughter’s name and had already been given to his new home as well. Little did he know that years later, he would marry someone with the same name.According to Alimchand’s book, Rajendra Kumar told him: “You must change the name. Dimple is my daughter’s name. We had named the Carter Road bungalow after her and have now named our new home Dimple too. But you have my blessings for your new home. May it bring you immense luck and prosperity.”

Soon after moving into Aashirwad, Rajesh Khanna’s career exploded. He became Hindi cinema’s first superstar, and thousands of fans gathered outside his home every day just to catch a glimpse of him. Women reportedly wrote him letters in blood, kissed his car, and queued outside the bungalow for hours.Funeral procession of the first superstar of Bollywood Rajesh Khanna at his bungalow Ashirwad in Carter Road, Bandra on Thursday. Express photo by Prashant Nadkar)In Dark Star: The Loneliness of Being Rajesh Khanna, author Gautam Chintamani writes that after moving into Aashirwad, “the façade of being a king was complete.”He describes the bungalow as Khanna’s royal court: “Khanna made tens of producers wait endlessly outside the fabled durbar... He would emerge in his famous silk lungi-kurta and sit on a chair placed slightly higher than the others to distinguish the king from his subjects. Only a select few had access to the inner sanctum... Whisky flowed endlessly through the night and those present sang praises of King Kaka.”Those who disagreed with him were often dismissed dramatically. “Aapko humara durbar chhodna padega.”The downfall of Rajesh Khannaln 1973, everything changed. Amitabh Bachchan’s Zanjeer introduced the ‘Angry Young Man’ to Hindi cinema. Soon, films like Deewaar and Sholay transformed Bollywood’s definition of a hero, and Rajesh Khanna’s era slowly came to an end. Although he tried to reinvent himself, he never managed to reclaim the phenomenal success he had once enjoyed.