

EYE SECRETS

Spy in every blink

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Naidu Reviews Floods, Orders 50kg Rice, Pushes Krishna Barrages



remain on high alert, continuously monitor the situation, and provide timely assistance to the affected people.

Naidu stressed the need to store floodwater to the maximum extent possible by filling reservoirs and their downstream tanks while carrying out rescue and relief operations. He asked officials to crease waterways wherever feasible to fill small and medium water bodies. The Chief Minister wanted officials to expedite the proposals for a new barrage between Pulichintala and Prakasam Barrage. He suggested that another barrage be built downstream of Prakasam Barrage. He directed officials to ready the proposals for the two barrages for submission to the Centre. Naidu ordered officials to expedite power supply to the Hiramandalam project, so that the lift works could be completed in coordination with the irrigation and energy departments. He asked officials to divert Vamsadhara water into the Hiramandalam reservoir. Officials informed the CM that the state's rainfall deficit

had declined from 50 per cent to 31 per cent following the recent rains. The deficit stood at 19.80 per cent in Coastal Andhra and 42 per cent in Rayalaseema. Inflows are continuing to rise in the North Andhra rivers from upstream areas.

Water levels have increased in 29 reservoirs following the heavy rains. Their combined storage, 101 TMC on September 23, has risen by around 21 TMC ft by September 26. In North Andhra, 11 projects gained around 5 TMC of water, while another 18 reservoirs in Kakinada, Polavaram, Alluri Sitarama Raju, Eluru, Palnadu, Nellore, Kurnool, Kadapa, and Anantapur districts recorded a combined increase of 16 TMC ft of water. In Vamsadhara basin, inflows into Gotta Barrage rose from 7,214 cusecs on September 20 to 47,100 cusecs on September 25. In Narayanapuram anicut in Nagavali basin, inflows increased from 2,100 cusecs to 49,800 cusecs, while in Madduvalasa project, inflows rose from 918 cusecs to around 18,000 cusecs, taking its storage from 1.61 TMC ft to 2.79 TMC ft. Inflows in the Thotapalli barrage rose from 2,484 cusecs to around 23,250 cusecs. In the

Godavari basin, storage in Donkarayi reservoir increased from 11.67 TMC ft to 15.78 TMC ft. Seeleru (Guntawada) reservoir saw an increase from 1.52 TMC ft to 3.90 TMC ft. Outflows from Dowleswaram Barrage rose from 1.20 lakh cusecs to 3.50 lakh cusecs.

At Prakasam Barrage, inflows and outflows rose from 8,187 cusecs to 40,521 cusecs, while at Munneru flows rose from 3,210 cusecs to 9,000 cusecs. Officials also reported increased flows in the Krishna, Godavari, Nagavali, and Vamsadhara basins. Agriculture minister K. Atchannaidu said the decision to supply 50 kg of rice free to every eligible fishing family in the cyclone-affected areas has been taken after the Chief Minister had been apprised of the hardships being faced by these families, whose livelihood depends entirely on marine fishing. Atchannaidu asked fishermen not to venture into the sea until weather conditions improve. He disclosed that a motorised fishing boat that had sailed from Kakinada had safely reached Paradip in Odisha on Saturday morning. All nine fishermen aboard the boat are safe.

VIJAYAWADA:, sept 26 Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday directed officials to capture maximum floodwater in reservoirs and tanks, while intensifying relief measures in the rain and flood-hit areas of the state. North Andhra has particularly suffered due to heavy rains. Reviewing with senior officials the heavy rainfall, rising inflows in rivers and flood situation through a teleconference, Naidu ordered distribution of 50 kg of rice for free to every fisherman's family who has been unable to venture into the sea for the past five days. Officials briefed the CM on inundation of residential areas in several districts, crop damage, and relief and rehabilitation measures. He asked officials to

to crease waterways wherever feasible to fill small and medium water bodies. The Chief Minister wanted officials to expedite the proposals for a new barrage between Pulichintala and Prakasam Barrage. He suggested that another barrage be built downstream of Prakasam Barrage. He directed officials to ready the proposals for the two barrages for submission to the Centre. Naidu ordered officials to expedite power supply to the Hiramandalam project, so that the lift works could be completed in coordination with the irrigation and energy departments. He asked officials to divert Vamsadhara water into the Hiramandalam reservoir. Officials informed the CM that the state's rainfall deficit

Sadhana Shrinkhla 2026: Vijayawada to host inter-state capacity building meet on Sep 29

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday said the state will host the Southern Regional Workshop of Sadhana Shrinkhla 2026 under 'Mission Karmayogi' in Vijayawada on September 29.

The regional workshop is aimed at capacity building among government employees and enhancing administrative skills, an official release said.

"Proud to announce that Andhra Pradesh will be hosting the Southern Regional Workshop of Sadhana Shrinkhla 2026 under Mission Karmayogi in Vijayawada on 29th September, alongside MoS Jitendra Singh," Naidu said in a post on 'X'.

Officials and stakeholders from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Puducherry will participate in the workshop.

The CM will inaugurate the workshop and senior officials from the Central and state governments and representatives of Mission Karmayogi will address the participants.

The workshop will focus on capacity building of government training institutions and enhancing the skills of government employees under Mission Karmayogi.

A demonstration will be given on the use of the iGOT-Mission Karmayogi platform for capacity building through the Unnati programme, the release said.

Discussions will also be held on the Mission Karmayogi Quality Framework and the draft framework for governance of various training institutions under the Karmayogi Kartavya programme.

Representatives from different states will share their



experiences and best practices through inter-state team activities and question-and-answer sessions.

The programme will commence at 10 am on September 29 with Naidu delivering the inaugural address at 10.30 am, followed by technical sessions on various subjects.

On September 30, the workshop will conclude with an expert session, presentations by participating states and group discussions.

The key message of the workshop is that government training institutions should evolve beyond being mere centres for conducting courses and emerge as partners in improving the performance of various departments.

The workshop is expected to facilitate capacity enhancement in governance and promote the exchange of best practices among the participating states, the release added.

Cockroaches, rat faeces found as TG SAFE acts against 11 Hyderabad eateries

TG SAFE has suspended the FSSAI licences of 11 restaurants in Madhapur, Hitec City and Gachibowli, directing them to stop operations after inspections found pest infestations, expired food, contamination, poor storage, unhygienic kitchens and other serious violations.

Hyderabad: The Telangana Standards Authority for Food and Essential Drugs (TG SAFE) has suspended the FSSAI licences of 11 restaurants in Madhapur, Hitec City and Gachibowli, directing them to immediately stop operations following inspections that found serious food safety and hygiene violations.

Ten enforcement teams comprising Food Safety Officers and police personnel inspected 20 establishments on September 26 as part of a special drive.

Officials reported cockroach and rodent infestations, rat faeces, expired and spoiled food, fungal contamination, unhygienic kitchens, improper food storage, clogged drains and poor hygiene at several establishments.

TG SAFE said 21 food samples were collected on suspicion of adulteration.

Improvement notices will be issued to six establishments, including Rameshwaram Cafe at Madhapur, Hotel Shadab at Gachibowli and Shah Ghouse Hotel and Restaurant at Gachibowli. Show-cause notices will be served on White Elephant Food Works (63 Degrees Modern Regional Buffet), Minerva Grand and Hotel Avasa, with further action, including penalties, to follow.

Among the violations recorded were expired food

articles, contaminated vegetables, poor refrigeration practices, inadequate pest control, missing water and food-handler health records, dirty utensils, greasy exhausts, damaged flooring and drainage problems.

The 11 establishments ordered to stop operations are:

- Monastery, Hitec City
- Shivani The Restaurant and Bar, Gachibowli
- Al Saba Restaurant, Gachibowli
- Lucky Multicuisine Restaurant, Madhapur
- Sai Ram Mess, Madhapur
- Udupi's Upahar, Gachibowli
- Coal Spark Multi Cuisine Restaurant, Hitec City
- Kanchi Cafe, Hitec City
- Antera Kitchen and Bar, Gachibowli
- Am Aha Telugu Kitchen and Bar, Inorbit Mall
- Fusion 9 / Amnesia Sky Bar, Inorbit Mall, Madhapur



CM Revanth Urges Centre To Confer Bharat Ratna On Manmohan, Set Up A Memorial In Delhi

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday urged the Centre to confer the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, posthumously on former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh and establish a memorial with a knowledge centre in his name in New Delhi.

Revanth Reddy made the demand after unveiling a statue of Dr Singh at Wipro Junction in the Financial District here on the former prime minister's birth anniversary. He said Dr Singh, then the finance minister, had pulled India out of the severe economic crisis of the early 1990s through landmark economic reforms and laid the foundation for the country's subsequent growth.

Revanth Reddy said the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation policies that Dr Singh introduced during that period had opened up the Indian economy to global investments and helped transform Hyderabad into a major IT and financial services hub. He said several global companies, including Google and Microsoft, had established operations in the Financial District.

The Chief Minister

said the Financial District now contributed nearly 49 per cent of Telangana's GDP, while Telangana accounted for about five per cent of the country's GDP. Installing Dr Singh's statue in the heart of the Financial District was therefore an appropriate tribute to his contribution.

Revanth Reddy said Dr Singh's contribution extended beyond economic reforms, recalling legislation and programmes enacted during his tenure as Prime Minister, including the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Right to Information Act and Right to Education Act. The RTI Act, enacted in 2005, created a statutory framework for citizens to seek information from public authorities.

He also credited Dr Singh and then UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi with facilitating the creation of Telangana state. Revanth Reddy said the statue incorporated a reference to Dr Singh's signature on the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014 creating Telangana state and recalled the then-Prime Minister's role in fulfilling the decades-old aspiration for a separate state.

"Some issues should

Revanth Reddy said the statue incorporated a reference to Dr Singh's signature on the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014 creating Telangana state and recalled the then-Prime Minister's role in fulfilling the decades-old aspiration for a separate state.

be decided by rising above politics," Revanth Reddy said, questioning why there should be any objection to conferring the country's highest civilian honour on Dr Singh. He said political considerations should not come in the way of honouring leaders who have made significant contributions to the nation.

Revanth Reddy described Dr Singh as a person of simplicity, gentleness, honesty and lofty ideals, saying his life was an open book and that he remained accessible to all.

He said the Centre's failure to establish a me-

morial for Dr Singh in Delhi was unfortunate, and urged it to set up a memorial incorporating a knowledge centre to preserve and disseminate his vast knowledge and contribution to public life.

Revanth Reddy also directed Congress MPs to raise the demand in Parliament and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to consider conferring the Bharat Ratna on Dr Singh. The Chief Minister said unveiling Dr Singh's statue was a matter of pride for him and that the memorial would inspire future generations to understand his contribution to the country.

Iran to get Chinese shoulder-launched missile systems in weeks, sources say

- Iran is expected to receive within weeks a first shipment out of up to 400 Chinese-made shoulder-fired air-defence missile launchers, three sources familiar with the deal told Reuters, as it rebuilds its defences amid war with the United States.The purchase, valued at \$60-70 million, is one of Tehran's largest-known efforts to strengthen its short-range air defences since the outbreak of its war with the U.S. and Israel, which exposed gaps in Iran's ability to protect military sites and strategic infrastructure.Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here.

The contract covers the purchase of between 300 and 400 man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), including Chinese-made QW-12 and FN-16 missiles, the sources said.The deal was signed with Zhongqing Baoshang International Investment, a Hong Kong-based company that the sources said was acting as an intermediary between the Iranian side and the Chinese supplier.IRAN NEEDS TO REARM AFTER MONTHS OF WARThe sources spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. Iran's foreign ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment.China's Foreign Ministry said: "The relevant reports are completely groundless. China has consistently played a role in promoting peace and ending the conflict."Beijing-based Zhong Qing Bao Shang Group, the parent company of Zhongqing Baoshang International Investment, did not immediately respond to an email request for comment on Tuesday.Iran needs to rearm after months of fighting in which the U.S. and Israel have struck facilities linked to its missile, drone and air-defence programmes, and Tehran responded with barrages of ballistic missiles and drones.The conflict has highlighted the challenge of defending fixed military and strategic sites against advanced aircraft and precision-guided weapons.Washington abruptly suspended two weeks of bombardment on Saturday, but President Donald Trump said strikes would resume if negotiations failed to end the five-month-old conflict, which has in theory been in a state of ceasefire since April.The delivery of hundreds of MANPADS would significantly expand Iran's inventory of short-range air-defence weapons and underscore how military ties with China are deepening.The sources cautioned that, although the agreement had been signed, delivery schedules, quantities and other implementation details could still change.Under a plan agreed by the parties, deliveries will initially be by air from Urumqi in western China, then transiting through Pakistan to Iran, according to the sources, who did not clarify whether the transfers would take place by air or by road.Pakistan's military public relations wing ISPR said: "Speculations of Pakistan being involved in supply of Air Defence weapons to Iran from China are absolutely concocted and false." A spokesperson for the Pakistani Foreign Ministry did not respond to requests for comment.



CHINA AND IRAN EXPLORE LAND ROUTES FOR DELIVERY, SOURCES SAYWhile Iran has invested heavily in the past two decades in missiles, drones and radar, military experts say portable air-defence systems are important because they can be dispersed quickly, operated by small teams and relocated frequently, making them less vulnerable than fixed air-defence batteries.A European security source said authorities in his country were aware of several contracts under discussion involving the possible sale of QW-series MANPADS to Iran, including QW-12, QW-18 and QW-19 systems.A second security source, in the Middle East, said Iran had been seeking to purchase QW-12 and QW-18 missiles, but they were unaware that a deal had already been concluded.The QW-12 and FN-16 are shoulder-fired, infrared-guided surface-to-air missile systems designed to engage low-flying aircraft, helicopters and drones. Their mobility allows them to be deployed rapidly around military installations, energy infrastructure and other sensitive sites.

Defence analysts regard the QW-12 as less capable than newer QW variants, including the QW-18 and QW-19, but say the systems can still provide an effective layer of short-range protection against drones and low-flying targets.Two Western intelligence sources and an Iranian official said Tehran had also explored the use of overland routes to move Chinese military supplies and dual-use components more discreetly and reduce the risk of disruption.The procurement highlights the Islamic Republic's continuing reliance on a combination of domestic weapons production and foreign suppliers despite years of sanctions and restrictions on defence-related imports.Reuters previously reported that Iran was close to securing a separate agreement with China to acquire anti-ship cruise missiles, according to people familiar with those negotiations. Reuters could not determine whether the agreement went through.Additional reporting by Liz Lee in Beijing, Clare Jim in Hong Kong and Rick Noack in Islamabad Writing by Parisa Hafezi; Editing by Kevin Liffey

Fear of war's spread as US, Saudi hit Iran-backed fighters in Iraq



DUBAI/CAIRO, The United States and Saudi Arabia jointly struck Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq on Wednesday, the first U.S. airstrikes in the Middle East since President Donald Trump suspended the U.S. bombing campaign against Iran last week.Iran, for its part, said it had fired on U.S. bases in Jordan and at ships in the Strait of Hormuz, prompting Trump to promise retaliatory strikes against Iran, which earlier reported a U.S. projectile hitting its northwestern city of Piranshahr near the Iraqi border.

Make sense of global markets with the Trading Day newsletter. Sign up here."We'll be hitting them hard," Trump told Fox News, adding, however, about the possibility of future talks with Iran: "We're going to let them keep talking."In a diplomatic setback, Tehran earlier rejected an Omani proposal to jointly manage the strait.With renewed fighting and no quick end in sight to the war that broke out in February, oil prices rose sharply for the first time since last week.

Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces, powerful Iran-backed paramilitary groups incorporated into the Iraqi security forces, said at least 20 members were killed and 32 wounded in U.S.-Saudi strikes targeting several bases across Iraq.Iraqi men shouted Shi'ite sectarian slogans and "Death to America!" as they carried the bodies of slain fighters in body bags out of a hospital in Mosul in northern Iraq, footage from Iraq's Al-Ahad television showed.Washington and Riyadh said they had jointly struck Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq in retaliation for drone attacks on Saudi oil targets launched from Iraq.It was the first major U.S. military action in the Middle East, and, if confirmed, in Iran, since last Friday, when Trump abruptly suspended an intensive bombing campaign after 13 days, having been advised by commanders that the strategy had run its course.

STRIKES COULD WIDEN CONFLICTIt was also the first time during the war that Saudi Arabia had publicly announced participating in strikes alongside the United States. That could widen the conflict by drawing Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia into combat against Shi'ite proxies of Iran on a new front.

Iraq's Shi'ite-led government, one of the few in the world to maintain close military and diplomatic ties with both Tehran and Washington, called an emergency meeting.The Iraqi presidency denounced the strikes on the paramilitaries as "an unacceptable attack and a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty", while also calling for a halt to attacks by armed groups against Iraq's neighbours.Iran said the U.S.-Saudi attacks were an attempt by the United States and Israel to spread their war further in the region. One of the Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, said U.S.

US military may require some troops in Mideast to surrender cell phones, sources say

The top U.S. commander for the Middle East has warned troops that cellphone videos shared online can help Iran target American bases, and sources told Reuters some deployed personnel could soon be ordered to surrender their phones.Any crackdown on mobile communications would add a new dimension to the conflict for the thousands of U.S. troops in the region, many of whom still rely on phones to periodically message loved ones and assure them they are well.

The Reuters Inside Track newsletter is your essential guide to global sports news. Sign up here.Admiral Brad Cooper, in a previously unreported letter, said Iran was benefiting from being able to see the success or failure of its strikes in near real-time by searching news reports or online posts by journalists referencing "reactions, photos, and footage from the cellphones of our troops."The direct, unavoidable cost of this open-source intelligence could be measured in the lives of American service members and civilian residents in targeted Gulf countries," Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, wrote in his July 28 letter, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters.He called on troops to "redouble our focus on operational security," without prescribing specific steps in the memo.

The warning underscored the mounting tensions between real-time news reporting on the war, often aided by satellite imagery and first-person accounts, and the desire by the U.S. military to restrict any information that could aid Iran as it tries to kill and wound U.S. troops.In Jordan, which has been a frequent target of Iranian strikes, some troops have been told their phones will be confiscated in the coming days, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.A third source said such a move was being considered in the region due to operational security concerns but did not present the confiscation as a certainty.Asked for comment, U.S. Central Command spokesperson Captain Timothy Hawkins said: "The message is a general reminder to our service members on the importance of maintaining operational security. This is one of many opportunities Admiral Cooper has used to convey operational priorities."

RUNNING FOR SHELTER DURING IRAN ATTACKIn a video posted online this month, a U.S. service member recorded a video as soldiers ran for shelter during a deadly Iranian attack on the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan on July 17.Cooper appeared to reference the footage in his letter, saying it had been recorded on Meta smart glasses with a built-in camera."Video captured from a service member's Meta glasses was posted on Instagram showing where and how the individual had evacuated to a bunker during an Iranian missile and drone attack," Cooper wrote.Iran would normally have a tough time determining the success or failure of its strikes, were it not for such accounts, Cooper said, thanks to the U.S. military's electronic jamming or other tactics used in war zones."Iran knows the weapons were fired; however, their forces do not know if they missed by 50



meters, hit an empty tarmac, or successfully struck a crowded facility," he wrote. "Detailed lists, descriptions, and analyses of what was hit, openly published by news outlets are essentially performing Iran's Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) for them, free of charge," Cooper said.Some 18 U.S. troops have died in the conflict with Iran that started on Feb. 28 and more than 600 have been wounded in the fighting, casualties that have deepened Americans' concerns about a war that just one in three Americans support.Democratic lawmakers have called for more information about the war, including details about damage to U.S. infrastructure on bases including radar towers, barracks and aircraft hangars. They have also called for the release of a U.S. military investigation into a likely U.S. strike on a girls' school in Iran, first reported by Reuters, on the opening day of the war on Feb. 28.Rules surrounding cell phone use for deployed troops can vary widely across the military, officials say. Many troops have to lock them away and cell phones can be banned on particularly sensitive missions by special operations forces, for example.But the possible seizure of phones has stoked anxiety among some family members, already on edge in recent months as they read Iranian claims of deadly strikes on bases throughout the Middle East, two of the sources said.U.S. officials have cautioned for years that certain applications on mobile devices, like fitness applications, can be exploited by adversaries to aid adversary targeting because of location data. Reuters reported in May that commercially available location data harvested from smartphones or other devices has been used to target or surveil U.S. forces.At the same time, the Pentagon has sought to carefully control the release of information due to what it says are operational security concerns, often declining to comment on Iran's attack claims or detail individual incidents that led to injuries of U.S. troops.Cooper said details on strikes can help Iran mount follow-up attacks.

Yemen's Houthis considering fees for ships sailing through Red Sea, sources say



LONDON/DUBAI, Yemen's Houthi group is considering imposing fees on commercial ships sailing through the southern Red Sea, a week after declaring a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia, regional sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.The Iran-aligned Houthis on July 20 declared a maritime embargo against Saudi Arabia, opening a new front against the U.S. and its allies in the Iran war and expanding attacks on tankers carrying global energy and other supplies to waters beyond the Gulf.

The Reuters Iran Briefing newsletter keeps you informed with the latest developments and analysis of the Iran war. Sign up here.The Houthis were looking into imposing fees on most traffic through the narrow Bab el-Mandeb gateway, which links the southern Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, the sources said. No timeframe was given at this stage for implementation, they added.The Houthis' media office did not respond to a request for comment.

Houthi officials travelled to Iran in July for the funeral ceremony of late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, where Iranian counterparts discussed with them the issue of imposing fees on Bab el-Mandeb transits, two regional officials briefed by Tehran told Reuters.The objectives of such a move would be to normalise the practice of imposing fees on international waterways and increase pressure on the United States, the sources said. Chinese ships would be exempted from such fees and the Houthis were supportive of the ar-

US, Saudi forces launch airstrikes on Iran-aligned groups in Iraq after drone attacks

Washington: US and Saudi Arabian forces carried out precision airstrikes against Iran-aligned groups in eastern Iraq on Tuesday (local time) after more than 30 drone attacks targeted American troops and Saudi energy infrastructure, the US Central Command said.US and Saudi fighter aircraft struck several logistics and weapons sites used by the groups, according to CENTCOM. It described the operation as a response to aerial attacks conducted over the previous 72 hours under the direction of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps."The unwarranted attacks against U.S. forces were not successful," CENTCOM said.

The command did not identify the groups targeted or disclose the locations of the strikes beyond saying they occurred across eastern Iraq. It also provided no information about casualties or the extent of damage

caused by the operation.CENTCOM said Iran-aligned militias in Iraq had attempted more than 600 attacks against US citizens and facilities between February and April 2026."The IRGC and its terrorist proxies must cease these attacks to avoid further U.S. military response," it said.The joint strikes came on a day of heightened military activity across the Middle East. CENTCOM said the IRGC launched several ballistic missiles from Iran at 5.45 p.m. Eastern Time in what it described as an attempted surprise attack on US forces stationed in the region.

"All Iranian missiles were successfully intercepted," the command said. "U.S. forces remain vigilant and at a high state of readiness."CENTCOM did not say how many missiles were fired, where they were intercepted or which US bases appeared to have been targeted. It also did not identify the defence systems used to stop them.The com-



mand separately said more than 20 US Navy warships were operating across the Middle East in support of military missions.

EYE SECRETS Editorial

NFHS-6 has harmonised away data India still needs

Health and Family Welfare, through the International Institute for Population Sciences, released the sixth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) compendium, covering almost 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts during 2023-24. NFHS-6 has 101 indicators, compared with 131 in NFHS-5 (2019-21), reflecting 43 removals and 13 additions. The government explains that it did not delete the indicators but harmonised them with other data systems to avoid duplication. These include child mortality, sex ratio at birth, anaemia among seven population groups, cancer screening, sanitation access, and clean cooking fuel.

Harmonisation can be justified because it reduces duplication and alleviates the burden on households repeatedly surveyed by consolidating survey systems. Emphasis, however, should be given to an empirical question, rather than a semantic one: Can each named alternative actually provide the same geographic resolution and public accessibility that NFHS provided? Evidence from NFHS-5 and NFHS-6, and the peer-reviewed Scopus-indexed literature, suggest they do not. The government has said that the Sample Registration System (SRS) would provide data on infant and child mortality that NFHS-6 no longer collects. However, the SRS was not designed to generate estimates at the district level. The Office of the Registrar General of India explicitly states that the goal of the SRS is to provide reliable estimates for States with more than a million people at the natural-division level and, for smaller States, at the State level rather than for individual districts.

A study published in the Scopus-indexed PLOS Global Public Health found that a majority of districts in India have maternal mortality levels above the Sustainable Development Goal-3 benchmark. Yet these district-level differences remain hidden in the State-level SRS bulletins, masking significant variations in data across districts. (Goli et al., 2022) Disease burden and mortality are concentrated acutely across States. A single district-level average across a State combines the best and worst-performing districts into one number that does not adequately represent either, making it harder to identify where the health burden is greatest. The cancer-screening indicator presents a less severe, but still significant, problem. According to a study published in the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care (Scopus-indexed), only 1.9 per cent of women aged 30-49 had ever been screened for cervical cancer, while only 0.9 per cent had been screened for breast cancer (Gopika, Prabhu, & Thulaseedharan, 2022). All the cancer screening indicators have been eliminated from NFHS-6, and the government has not identified a direct replacement. The closest alternative is the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP), operated by the ICMR's National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (ICMR-NCDIR, 2020). However, the NCRP records diagnosed cancer cases, which is fundamentally different from measuring general screening uptake. Earn Health Certifications NFHS-6 may reduce duplication, but losing comparable district-level data risks leaving India with a weaker picture of the inequalities its health programmes seek to address. Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Odisha are among the States where ICMR-NCDIR's (2020) national report states there are no population-based cancer registries.

Traders across Madhya Pradesh cover QR codes in protest against UPI fee



Indore: Traders across Madhya Pradesh observed a 'No UPI Day' on Wednesday to protest the Centre's decision to impose a 0.4 per cent merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000 by covering QR codes at their shops with black cloth.

The protesters appealed to customers to make payments in cash. Ramesh Khandelwal, president of the Ahilya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a federation of trade organisations, claimed that members in Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ratlam, Neemuch, Mandsaur and Jaora participated in the campaign.

According to the central government, an MDR of 0.4 per cent will be levied on person-to-merchant transactions above Rs 2,000 from October 15. No MDR will be levied on UPI transactions up to Rs 2,000. Khandelwal said traders were not against the government but questioned why an additional burden was being placed on them if the money collected through MDR was not going to the government treasury.

According to Khandelwal, who represents Madhya Pradesh on the National Traders Welfare Board, a central government advisory body, nearly 125 business organisations in Indore, the state's financial capital, participated in the 'No UPI Day' campaign. Citing the broader interests of traders and consumers, Akshay Jain, president of the Indore Retail Garments Association, said the Centre should immediately withdraw the decision to impose a 0.4 per cent MDR on UPI transactions exceeding Rs 2,000. Jain said that if the decision was not withdrawn before October 15, traders would "immerse UPI QR code machines" in water bodies. The government has clarified that customers will not be charged any additional amount due to the changes to the UPI

Amid Vimal Elaichi row, Tukaram Mundhe's reminder to Bollywood celebs: 'Influence is not immunity'



Weeks after the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Maharashtra issued a show-cause notice to Bollywood actors Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn and Tiger Shroff over their Vimal Elaichi advertisement, Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe has reminded celebrities of their responsibility while promoting food products. And it has come with a warning, almost. "Artists, like everyone else, must respect the law and recognise the responsibility that comes with endorsing products, behaviours and habits that shape public choices," he said. He added that "when influence is used to endorse food products, public health cannot be an afterthought," adding that the state had "already issued notices to artists for endorsements that raise concerns in the larger public interest." "The principle is simple: no one is above the law, and no commercial inter-

est can take precedence over public health," the post read. Artists, like everyone else, must respect the law and recognise the responsibility that comes with endorsing products, behaviours and habits that shape public choices. Tukaram Mundhe shared the message on X along with a 35-second video of President Droupadi Murmu, urging popular actors not to endorse harmful products. In the clip, the President can be heard saying that very famous film actors have immense potential to influence the nation, particularly its youth. "I request that famous actors don't endorse food products that are harmful to health," she said in Hindi, adding, "A star is one that spreads light, not darkness." Mundhe's remarks follow show-cause notices to Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn and Tiger Shroff, alleging that their Vimal Elaichi advertisement amounted to surrogate advertising for Vimal Pan Masala, a product prohibited in the state. The notices, issued on August 11, gave the three actors 15 days to respond and directed them to stop appearing in the advertisement. According to Mundhe, two of the actors have submitted replies, while one failed to respond within the deadline. The case has also reached the courts. The Delhi High Court dismissed a petition filed by PB Agro LLP, the master licensee for the manufacture and sale of elaichi and pan masala not containing tobacco under the Vimal brand, seeking to quash the notices, saying it lacked territorial jurisdiction.

Gunshot, children's screams, then cops storm in: Inside 7-hour standoff at UP village

At 12.45 am on Wednesday, a single gunshot rang out from behind a locked bedroom door. Moments later, police heard the screams of children. Azamgarh SSP Anil Kumar, Special Operations Group in-charge Sanjay Singh and constable Pradeep Pandey broke down the door and rushed into the roughly 10x12-foot room. For nearly seven hours, they had been outside this room, at a single-storey house in Shambhupur village, trying to persuade 45-year-old Arvind Singh to come out with his three children. But the farmer allegedly refused every appeal, threatening to shoot the children if anyone entered. Inside the room, they found Singh holding his licensed revolver. His nine-year-old son lay bleeding from a gunshot wound. Police said Singh allegedly swung the gun towards the trio and fired. The officers fired back, injuring him. Singh and his son were rushed to hospital, where they died. The two other children, daughters aged 10 and six months, were rescued safely. "The three of us had made up our minds to storm the room and act if Arvind took any step to harm the children," said SSP Kumar. "We initially tried our best to convince him to release the children and surrender, but he wasn't willing to listen." The final confrontation came after Singh had allegedly killed his wife and two priests during a religious ceremony at his home around 5.45 pm on Tuesday.

It began with a ritual. According to police, Singh's family had organised a five-day puja for his wellbeing, believing he was "possessed by an evil spirit". Three priests had been called to conduct the ceremony, with each being paid Rs 1,000. According to police and relatives, Singh allegedly became agitated during the puja and began hurling abuses at the priests, Mahendra Pathak, 42, and Akhilesh Mishra, 55. He called them frauds and questioned their identities. His wife, Babita, 35, intervened, asking him to speak calmly since the prayers were being held at their own house. Police claimed Singh assaulted Babita. He then went inside, took out his licensed revolver and opened fire at his wife and the priests. Babita, Pathak and Mishra were injured and taken to hospital, where doctors declared them dead. The third priest fled. The killings left Shambhupur, a village of around 6,000 people



about 35 km from the district headquarters, stunned. According to village pradhan Santosh Nishad, Singh's behaviour allegedly changed after the murder of his brother, Sunil Singh alias Pappu, in 2017. Singh's relatives were arrested in that case. He claimed Singh would often become aggressive and was receiving treatment in Varanasi. Police also said an assault case was registered against Singh in 2020.

After the shooting, Arvind locked himself in the bedroom with his children. Police quickly cordoned off the house and tried one approach after another to get Singh to open the door. Singh's mother, two sisters, a niece and an uncle were brought to the house to talk him into coming out. From near the gate, they repeatedly called out to him and asked him to open the door. Police kept them away from the bedroom, fearing Singh could open fire. Senior officers, including Additional Director General, Varanasi zone, Naveen Arora, also tried to persuade Singh to surrender. Police offered to send biscuits and milk into the room for the children. They assured Singh that he would not be harmed. Instead, police claimed, he continued speaking to relatives about his grievances and repeatedly threatened to shoot the police and the children if anyone entered. In the chaos after the shooting, police suspect the six-month-old daughter, whom Singh had been holding, slipped from his arms and fell to the floor. "The accused had fired five rounds at the police team — it was close-range contact. We had to keep both the children and ourselves safe," a police officer said.

Gujarat AAP MLA in jail, his two wives take up his political agenda

With the influential tribal leader and the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP's) MLA from Dediapada Chaitar Vasava behind bars, the political baton in the tribal belt of South Gujarat is being carried by his two wives, Shakuntala and Varsha. The two women have stepped into the field to take up a range of issues, from land rights to alleged encroachment. The organisational changes announced by the BJP on September 22 in the tribal dominated Narmada district (and in the adjoining Bharuch district) were to a large extent a response to the AAP's strong showing in the Narmada local body elections in April. The AAP's campaign was powered by Chaitar Vasava, who repeatedly raised the issues of land acquisition, rehabilitation and employment that resonated strongly among tribal voters. Chaitar was sent to jail in June after a sessions court in Narmada sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment in a 2023 case arising out of the alleged assault and intimidation of forest officials. Although the sentence removed him from day-to-day political activity, his influence in the area remains largely undiminished, which his wives are currently seeking to amplify. On Tuesday (September 22), Shakuntala and Varsha showed up at Kodvav village in the Netrang taluka of Bharuch to meet farmers who have alleged they have been assaulted by unidentified individuals, and had their land encroached upon following a dispute.

The women and other AAP leaders met with the aggrieved families, heard their accounts, and assured them of the party's support in pursuing the matter through legal and administrative channels. Varsha Vasava said the AAP delegation had visited a family whose standing crop had been allegedly cut, and whose land was allegedly encroached upon. She said AAP would stand by the family through the legal battle and provide the required support. "Whatever happens in this struggle in the coming days, we are with the families, and we are ready to stand with them and fight for their rights," Varsha said. She said the party would consult lawyers to decide the next course of action, and would submit a memorandum to the Prant Officer. Varsha also appealed to members of the tribal community to participate in what she described as a "collective struggle" for tribal rights.

Chaitar has been in Vadodara Central Jail after an Additional Sessions Court in Rajpipla sentenced him and eight others to seven years in prison on June 23 this year. According to the prosecution, five forest officials were summoned to Vasava's residence during an anti-encroachment drive in Narmada district, where they were



allegedly abused and threatened, and a firearm was allegedly brought out and fired in the air. The state also alleged that the officials were coerced into arranging Rs 60,000 in compensation for people whose crops had been removed during the forest department's encroachment-clearance exercise. Vasava challenged the conviction and sought suspension of his sentence, but the Gujarat High Court rejected his plea in August. The court subsequently granted him seven days' temporary bail in September to attend the Assembly session. Vasava's wife Shakuntala, who was also among the nine accused in the case, was released on bail after the Gujarat High Court suspended her sentence in July. With both his wives now making their presence felt at programs and meeting aggrieved communities, the family has sought to maintain AAP's visibility in a region where Chaitar has built his political base around tribal rights and land-related issues. But this is not the first time that Shakuntala and Varsha have filled in for Chaitar. During his post-arrest incarceration in 2024, followed by his conditional release preventing him from stepping foot in Dediapada, Shakuntala and Varsha had taken on the task of managing his maiden Lok Sabha campaign. Chaitar was contesting as the India Bloc candidate from Bharuch Lok Sabha constituency, riding on his 2022 Gujarat Assembly victory — his first electoral contest — by a margin of more than 1 lakh votes. At Kodvav village on Tuesday, the party also raised broader concerns over the role of Gram Panchayats in land transactions in tribal areas. Raju Vasava, president of the AAP-led Valia taluka panchayat, said the party would consult lawyers on the issue before deciding its next course of action. He said the matter would subsequently be discussed with the affected people and a memorandum will be submitted to the Prant Officer.

PMC to give 12 acres at Phursungi-Uruli Devachi to BPCL for bio-CNG project



The PMC's responsibilities will be limited to transporting segregated wet waste to the plant and providing basic infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, sewerage and a boundary wall. The PMC's responsibilities will be limited to transporting segregated wet waste to the plant and providing basic infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, sewerage and a boundary wall.

In a bid to increase wet waste processing capacity, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has decided to allot 12 acres of land at its garbage depot in Phursungi-Uruli Devachi to Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) for setting up a bio-CNG plant that will process 300 metric tonnes of wet waste daily. "The entire cost of construction of the project, including its maintenance and repairs, will be borne by BPCL, and the Municipal Corporation will only have to provide the land and necessary basic facilities," said Municipal Commissioner Naval Kishore Ram. The land is proposed to be allotted for 25 years, covering the operation and maintenance period, at a nominal rent of Re 1 per acre per year, said committee chairman Srinath Bhimale. Pune generates around 2,700 to 2,800 metric tonnes of solid waste every day. Of this, approximately 1,000 to 1,100 metric tonnes of wet waste is collected through the municipal system. Another 150 metric tonnes is treated through organic waste management and home composting. However, the city currently has an installed wet waste processing capacity of only 595 metric tonnes per day.

The PMC's existing projects include a 200-tonne-per-day plant at Hadapsar, a 100-tonne facility at the Katraj Transfer Centre, a 50-tonne facility at the Katraj Railway Museum and decentralised biogas projects with a combined capacity of 45 tonnes per day. The Nobel Exchange project at Sus has an installed capacity of 200 tonnes per day. However, the administration has stated that it currently processes only 30 to 50 tonnes daily. At present, around 600 to 700 metric tonnes of segregated wet waste is given to farmers for composting every day. The administration has said that, under the Solid Waste Management and Handling Rules, waste generated within the limits of local bodies must be processed and scientifically disposed of. It has, therefore, stressed the need to expand processing capacity rather than depend on farmers to handle the waste. 1,375-tonne capacity needed to process 1,100 tonnes of waste. The administration has stated that, assuming daily wet waste generation of 1,100 tonnes and an operational efficiency of 80 per cent, the city needs an installed processing capacity of at least 1,375 tonnes per day. The proposed 300-tonne-per-day BPCL project will help bridge the gap. However, additional processing facilities will be required to meet future increases in waste generation. No financial burden on PMCBPCL will bear the entire cost of construction, operation and maintenance, with no financial assistance from the civic body. The PMC's responsibilities will be limited to transporting segregated wet waste to the plant and providing basic infrastructure, including roads, water, electricity, sewerage and a boundary wall. BPCL will pay the monthly electricity and water bills.

IIT Bombay sets up committee to examine circumstances surrounding student's death



Mumbai: IIT Bombay on Wednesday set up a 10-member high-level committee to probe the circumstances surrounding the death of student Sahil Wakode, an official said. The panel, constituted by the Board of the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, was also likely to question Professor Suryanarayana Doolla, an accused in the case, the official added. The Mumbai Police Crime Branch is already conducting a probe into the death of Wakode, a second-year B-Tech student. Wakode was found hanging in his hostel room on the evening of September 18, hours after he was allegedly caught using a mobile phone to access ChatGPT during a mid-semester examination.

BDL to supply 160 SAT-SAAW weapons to Indian Air Force

Hyderabad: Hyderabad-based Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) is set to supply Satellite Smart Anti-Airfield Weapons (SAT-SAAW) to the Indian Air Force (IAF). The Ministry of Defence on Wednesday signed a contract with BDL for the procurement of 160 SAT-SAAW systems along with associated equipment for the IAF at a total cost of Rs 810.79 crore under the Buy (Indian — Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category.

The never-ending controversy of NEET 2025



The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) or the examination touted to determine the fate of about 24 lakh students across the country has been mired in controversy. This year the examination was plagued with multiple controversies, be it paper leaks, tampered OMR sheets, distribution of wrong question papers, statistically impossible scores and an unprecedented high score.

On May 5 NEET was held across the country and roughly 24 lakh students appeared in it. As per reports, a day before the examination on May 4, the paper was leaked, and a group of problem solvers were tasked with solving the paper and aiding four candidates in preparing for the exam. During the investigation, the Bihar police claimed it had procured confession letters from candidates stating that the paper they were shown on the 4th was the same as the NEET question paper on May 5. On the day of the exam itself, social media was abuzz with allegations of paper leaks. The Gujarat District Education Department of Panchmahal district raided a NEET UG exam centre at Jai Jalaram School in Godhra, Gujarat and seized a list of students from a schoolteacher who had allegedly told the students to only attempt questions they were confident about and he would complete the remainder. An FIR was registered by the Gujarat police.

The National Testing Agency, the body responsible for conducting the examination, was quick to rubbish claims of paper leak and explained the social media videos of students leaving the hall being a result of the invigilator distributing the English Language paper instead of Hindi. It ensured that the integrity of the examination process remained intact and even declared that the students who were given the wrong paper were being given a retest on the same day. On May 17, Vanshika Yadav moved the Supreme Court asking for a fresh NEET-UG examination, on the ground that the paper leaks are in violation of Article 14 and give an unfair advantage to a select group of students. As an interim prayer, the Petitioner sought a stay on the declaration of results. The Supreme Court refused to grant the stay but issued notice to the State to hear the matter in July.

The results were declared on June 4, 10 days before the scheduled date. Further, a record 67 students scored the perfect score of 720. In 2023, only two students had got the perfect score. Several questions were raised about the sudden surge in the candidates getting the perfect score. It was found that 6 of the students who got the perfect score had seat numbers in the same sequence and were from Haryana. Some results were also statistically impossible considering negative marking. On June 6, the NTA issued a three-page press release addressing the controversial results and paper leak allegations. It explained the statistically impossible scores and high marks on account of grace marks allocated for loss of time to certain candidates. It also categorically ruled out any paper leaks and stated isolated acts of unfair means were being dealt in accordance with the law. A few days later, on June 11, several petitions challenging the NEET exams came up before a vacation bench of the Supreme Court. All the matters were directed to be tagged together and the Court asked the NTA to respond. Justice Amanullah stated that "Sanctity has been affected."

What was the tussle over Covaxin IPR? | Explained



The story so far: The maker of the indigenous coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL), has admitted to an “inadvertent error” in patent filings to protect the vaccine’s Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). One of India’s leading biotechnology companies, it had failed to include scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) as co-inventors in the Covaxin patent filings.

What kind of rights govern vaccine patents?

India's patent laws govern both product and process patents. Product patents grant an inventor a monopoly over, say, a drug. Process patents bar competitors from making a similar drug using the same sequence of steps. In response to queries from The Hindu, Bharat Biotech said it had patented the process, namely of making a batch of vaccines from the virus strains that were provided by the ICMR-NIV (National Institute of Virology). This is the lab that has expertise in extracting viruses from blood samples, identifying its characteristics, conducting various tests to gauge its infectiousness and qualify it in comparison to related strains. However, preparing a vaccine out of this at an industrial scale is beyond the capabilities of a lab and requires a different order of facilities that only established vaccine manufacturers have. Covaxin is an inactivated version of COVID-causing coronavirus; once injected into the body it coaxes

so we need answers." All NEET matters were adjourned to July 8. Finally, on June 24, amid public outcry, all the investigation into the allegations of the paper leak was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation, which has since then made a spate of arrests and raids across the country. On July 8, a bench headed by the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, began hearing the multiple petitions on the NEET controversy. Petitions have also been filed praying that the NEET is not conducted again.

The Court at the outset requested all parties not to treat the proceedings as adversarial and work together to arrive at a solution which would benefit all the students. He observed, "One thing which is very clear is that the leak has taken place. That the sanctity of the exam has been breached is beyond doubt. The question is how widespread is the leak,?" After hearing the matter for some time, the Court framed three main issues which needed to be resolved:(i) ?Whether the alleged breach took place at a systemic level;(ii) ?Whether the breach is of a nature which affects the integrity of the entire examination process; and(iii) ?Whether it is possible to segregate the beneficiaries of the fraud from the untainted students.It then proceeded to note that factual clarity was needed on issues like when the leak was known, where the leak happened, the manner of the leak, duration of the leak, a chain of custody of the paper, what was leaked and sought a status report from the CBI. It also directed the NTA to shed light on the steps taken to identify where the leak took place, and the identification of beneficiaries, among others.

Regarding the various petitions, it appointed advocates Sumit Kumar Sharma and Shwetank Sailakwal as the nodal counsel and asked them to file a common submission not exceeding 10 pages on why re-testing was the only solution. The CBI, Centre and NTA were directed to file their affidavits by 5 PM on 10th July 2024 and the matter was listed for July 11, 2024. On July 10, both the Union and NTA denied any systemic failings. The Union government in its affidavit relied on the analysis of the results by the Director of IIT, Madras, which concluded that there was no indication of malpractice or abnormal scores. The sudden increase in marks obtained was attributed to the 25% reduction in syllabus. It also noted that the high-ranking students were from across the country and not isolated to a few centres. The NTA maintained in its affidavit that the integrity of the examinations was not compromised and isolated instances of leaks were being dealt in accordance with law. It also stated that a re-test would be akin to punishing innocent meritorious students for the fault of a few. On July 11, several petitioners mentioned they had not received the affidavit and sought time to rebut the same. Taking note of the personal difficulty of the ASG and counsel for NTA and Court holiday on account of Moharram, the Court adjourned the matter to 18th July. Meanwhile, the CBI has also placed a status report on the investigation before the Court in a sealed cover. The impact/ The outcome of the proceedings impacts not only the 24 lakh candidates but their families and future aspirants as well. Medical entrances are highly competitive in India. Many students spend years preparing for the exam. The 24 lakh candidates are competing to secure admission in only 1.08 lakh seats of which only 56,000 are seats in Government hospitals. This has led to an influx of private coaching institutions charging mammoth fees. When NEET was introduced in 2013, it faced severe criticism and legal challenges. Among the several criticisms, one was that it made medical education inaccessible for the poor and marginalised who had studied in State boards and could not afford expensive private coaching. The highly competitive examination and pressure on the students are attributed as one of the primary causes of suicide among NEET aspirants. In such a context, the examination process not only needs to be fair but appear to be fair to assure all the students that all their efforts will not go in vain.

it into producing antibodies that can potentially protect against severe disease from a coronavirus infection. To do this effectively, an 'adjuvant' is added which increases the vaccine's potency. Vaccine makers may have their own ways of bringing all of these steps together and, given the competitive nature of the field, strive to ward off competitors from imitating these processes to gain a temporary monopoly in the market and rake profits. To be sure, while companies are free to file for a product or process patent in as many countries as they can afford, a patent is only granted after regulatory authorities grant them one or are convinced that this process is indeed novel or inventive. BBIL, as far as publicly known, hasn't yet been granted these patents.

What were the roles of BBIL and ICMR?

BBIL had collaborated with the ICMR-NIV for all the steps in developing a vaccine. The two organisations had signed an agreement that spelt out each entity's responsibilities. As ICMR is a public entity and because of the scale of the COVID crisis, there were Right To Information requests to make this agreement public. However, it was only in July 2021, that parts of the agreement were made public in Rajya Sabha. Beyond transferring the strains and making vaccines, the agreement said, ICMR would also test these vaccines on animals — rodents to monkeys — and then on people to establish that the vaccine worked as intended. The ICMR also funded these clinical trials — ₹35 crore — and incurred costs in developing Covaxin. In return it was to get 5% of royalties that BBIL earned from the sale of Covaxin. Since the announcement of the BBIL and ICMR collaboration it was generally accepted that both entities would contribute to the vaccine and would therefore hold "joint intellectual property rights," as was stated in Parliament. However, BBIL first told The Hindu that it made a distinction between the rights governing the making of the vaccine and the rights over the data generated from clinical trials. The ICMR hadn't invested in the actual making of the vaccine, and so wasn't included in patent applications. However, a day after the matter became public, BBIL said it had made a mistake, and that it would be making amends by filing fresh applications that listed ICMR personnel as inventors. It is unclear what prompted this.

Why does being cited as an inventor matter?

IPR is a vast, complex domain and spans the minutest parts of the product invention process. As the development of pharmaceutical products involves a wide range of expertise, it is hard for single firms or entities to develop everything in-house.

Why dengue cases are on the rise | Explained



The story so far: In the past few weeks, cases of dengue have been rising in some parts of the country. Karnataka, in particular, has been experiencing a rapid surge in cases in the last few days, while the cases have been climbing up in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as well. According to data published on the website of the National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control, the country has recorded 19,447 cases of dengue and 161 deaths till April 30, 2024. Going by this data, Kerala and Tamil Nadu accounted for the most number of cases; the former had 4,412 cases and 14 deaths and the latter registered 4,204 cases and two deaths. Karnataka, where cases are currently soaring, had, till then, recorded 2,503 cases and nil deaths. Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh were the only other States with over 1,000 cases each.

Figures from the daily bulletin now being issued by Karnataka's Department of Health and Family Welfare show that the State recorded a total of 7,840 cases of dengue and seven deaths from January 1 to July 10. Of this, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike recorded the most number of cases at 2,292. The active caseload in the State stood at 358. On July 10 alone, the State reported 293 cases.

What is the global situation of dengue?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of April 30, over 7.6 million cases of dengue were reported in 2024. This included 3.4 million confirmed cases, over 16,000 severe cases and over 3,000 deaths. In an update on the global scenario dated May 30, it said that 90 countries have known active dengue transmission, adding that “not all of which have been captured in formal reporting”. WHO pinpointed that the actual burden of dengue is underestimated as many endemic countries did not have strong detection and reporting mechanisms. The WHO noted that at least five countries, including India, were grappling with the onset of monsoon season, which created suitable conditions for the breeding and survival of *Aedes* mosquito. Urbanisation and population movements have also played a pivotal role in the increasing burden in the region. WHO observed that the incidence of dengue has grown dramatically around the world in recent decades. “About half of the world’s population is now at risk of dengue with an estimated 100-400 million infections occurring each year.

Zika virus: the need to improve surveillance and vector control



The Zika virus is making the news once again. At least 15 cases, including eight pregnant women, of Zika have been discovered so far in Pune, Maharashtra. In Karnataka, a 74-year-old who had Zika has died. State Health Department officials say the death was caused by other factors. Another suspected case in Karnataka is being investigated as well. The Pune Municipal Corporation has said it has stepped up surveillance; the Karnataka Health Department has released guidelines on the virus for the public, and both States have urged members of the public to ensure there are no mosquito-breeding sites at their homes. Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry has issued an advisory to States to be vigilant; screen pregnant women, and strengthen entomological surveillance and intensify vector-control activities. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has asked States not only to increase testing for Zika but also to test patients with chikungunya and dengue-like symptoms who test negative for these infections for Zika, as per a news report. As the monsoon continues over large parts of the country, creating ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and with cases of dengue spiking as well, State administrations and members of the public need to step up mosquito-control measures to prevent transmission of diseases.

What is the Zika virus?

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus first identified in Uganda in 1947 in a Rhesus macaque monkey, followed by evidence of infection and disease in humans in other African countries in the 1950s. Zika virus occurs through the bite of infected *Aedes* mosquitoes, mainly *Aedes aegypti*, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya. The *Aedes* mosquitoes usually bite during the day. Sexual transmission, transmission from mother to foetus and transfusions of blood and blood products are other routes of transmission.

What are the symptoms?

Most people infected with the Zika virus do not develop symptoms, the WHO says. Among those who do, they typically start 3–14 days after infection and are generally mild, including rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, and headache, which usually last for 2–7 days.

How is the Zika virus diagnosed?

Zika virus may be suspected based on symptoms or on the fact that the person is living in or visiting areas where Zika transmission has occurred. A diagnosis can only be given after a laboratory test. A recent report in The Hindu pointed to gaps in the tracking and surveillance of the virus, highlighting the fact that in March 2023, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), India's apex agency for diagnostic approvals, confirmed that there was no approved diagnostic test for Zika. This limitation, the report said, hinders the country's ability to diagnose Zika. At present, samples are generally sent to a few select labs, including the National Institute of Virology, for confirmation. The NIV, a media report indicates, is flooded with samples, leading to delays in the issuing of reports.

What are the complications caused by Zika?

Zika virus infection during pregnancy, the WHO says, can cause infants to be born with microcephaly and other congenital malformations and can also cause preterm

Dengue is found in tropical and sub-tropical climates worldwide, mostly in urban and semi-urban areas," it pointed out. Dengue is endemic in more than 100 countries in the WHO regions of Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia and Western Pacific. The Americas, South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions were the most seriously affected, with Asia accounting for around 70% of the global disease burden. However, it also went on to note that dengue is spreading to new areas in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean and South America.

How does dengue spread and how is it treated?

Dengue virus is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes, with the primary vector that transmits the disease being *Aedes aegypti*. While cases are mostly asymptomatic or mild, some may develop severe dengue that could include shock, severe bleeding or organ impairment. According to the National Guidelines for Clinical Management of Dengue Fever, an acute febrile illness of two to seven days duration with two or more of the following manifestations - headache, retro-orbital pain, myalgia, arthralgia, rash and haemorrhagic manifestations - were the clinical features of dengue fever. Clinical management of dengue fever may vary depending on the severity of illness. In those without any warning signs or complications, dengue is managed through symptomatic and supportive treatment.

What are the emerging patterns in dengue?

Researchers and public health experts have been closely monitoring the emerging patterns in dengue. While it remains a serious public health concern, surveillance, vector control, prevention of disease transmission, access to proper medical care, early and prompt diagnosis and appropriate management of cases are the much-needed focus areas. Among the several factors associated with an increasing risk of dengue epidemics were changing distribution of *Aedes aegypti* vector, urbanisation and human activities fostering conducive environments for vector-host interaction and climate change-induced shifts in weather patterns, according to WHO.

In the article 'Prevention and Control Strategies to Counter the Dengue Cyclical Trend in Tamil Nadu', published in the Tamil Nadu Journal of Public Health and Medical Research, public health officials said that the first epidemic of clinical dengue-like illness was recorded in erstwhile Madras in 1780. Dengue virus was isolated in India during 1945 for the first time. The first evidence of the occurrence of dengue fever in the country was reported in 1956 from Vellore district in the State, they said. Noting that dengue was once considered to be an arboviral disease of the urban environment infecting populations in municipalities, corporations and cities, they said the infection has spread to all geographic regions including rural and urban due to rapid increase in urbanisation, expanding travel patterns and climatic changes. Tamil Nadu, they said, has witnessed outbreaks of dengue infection once in every five years in the past decade with the last outbreak occurring in 2017.

Malini Sharma quit Bollywood after Raaz; now grows food, lives in a farm stay in a jungle



Remember CATS, the early-2000s television show that starred Nafisa Joseph, Kuljeet Randhawa and Malini Sharma? While Joseph and Randhawa later died by suicide, Sharma gradually stepped away from the spotlight. Unlike many actors who disappear from the public eye, however, she seems to have found a life far removed from showbiz — one surrounded by trees, farms, home-grown food and guests. Today, Sharma lives in the Sahyadri Hills, where she runs a farmstay, grows vegetables, hosts guests and has embraced what she describes as a slower way of living.

Sharma first caught the public’s attention as a model when she appeared in the Bombay Vikings music video “Kya Soorat Hai”, which became an instant hit. She subsequently featured in Mika Singh’s “Saawan Mein Lag Gayi Aag”, another music video that continues to remain popular.

By the time she landed a role in CATS, Sharma’s modelling career was already gaining momentum. Her appearance on the show also opened doors in films. She went on to play a pivotal role in Vikram Bhatt’s Raaz (2002), alongside Dino Morea and Bipasha Basu.Malini Sharma in CATS. (Photo: Express Archives) Malini Sharma in CATS.

The horror film became a major success and turned its lead cast into household names. Although Sharma had a comparatively smaller role, her portrayal left a lasting impression on audiences. Her appearance in the film, particularly in the song “Aapke Pyaar Mein,” became one of the most recognisable aspects of her brief Bollywood career.Around the same period, Sharma was married to actor Priyanshu Chatterjee, who had made his film debut with Tum Bin in 2001. The marriage, however, ended in divorce within a few years. Sharma subsequently began moving away from the limelight.

When Malini Sharma chose to step behind the cameraIn 2002, Sharma reportedly backed out of the film Encounter just 48 hours before it went on the floor. According to India Today, she had realised after years of working as a model and actor that she wanted to explore work behind the camera. The film eventually starred Naseeruddin Shah, Dilip Prabhavalkar and Tara Deshpande.

Over the years, Sharma largely disappeared from mainstream entertainment coverage. She did not, however, completely disappear from public life. Instead, she built something of her own.

From The Slow Local to life on a farmSharma is active on social media, although she doesn’t use her celebrity name as the identity of her venture. Instead, she operates under the name The Slow Local, a project she began nearly a decade ago and which has evolved considerably over the years.The venture initially brought together locally made food, crafts, workshops and pop-up events in Versova. Sharma has hosted children’s workshops, including storytelling sessions, and sold homemade bread, South Indian coffee, granola, jams, peanut butter and different varieties of oils. She has also been associated with plant exhibitions, handmade ceramics, crochet, decoupage and homemade cakes and other food products.Sharma now runs a farmstay in the Sahyadris, around two hours from Pune, where she grows vegetables and prepares meals for guests using produce from the farm. In one of her Instagram videos, she spoke about the

challenges of growing enough food for the property.“When I started The Slow Local Diaries, I confessed I did a shoddy job with the vegetable produce but this year, the produce has been better. The challenge is to produce enough for meal after meal,” she said.The property appears to be surrounded by considerable greenery, and Sharma has made it clear that she does not intend to disturb the natural habitat around it. Speaking about the land, she said: “We have mostly grown fruit trees at the farm .. the land came with great abundance when we bought it .. several arjun and harad trees, we also have a few kokum, an ancient Palash, shikakai and still discovering more.”

She has also said that many of the trees and plants on the property have medicinal value, something she is still learning about. The farm itself is large enough to encompass part of a mountain. Sharma has deliberately left that portion untouched.“We have left the jungle be in the mountain, we don’t want to disturb the habitat. It is our own little forest,” she said.Her stated intention has been to grow organic food for guests while creating a space where people can slow down and reconnect with nature. Sharma appears to have moved to the farm around 2020. In a 2025 post about visiting the Kaas Plateau, she wrote that she had first read about the place around four years earlier, after moving to the farm, giving us a timeline of when she moved to the farm.“Recently visited the kaas plateau... its a 3.5 hour drive from the farm .. there were few varieties in bloom but more will come about as the season progresses.. always wanted to visit the valley of flowers in uttarakhand as I didn’t know about kaas .. i read about kaas 4 years back when i moved to the farm .. finally saw it .. would love to go again before seson ends in Oct,” she wrote.

Despite the curiosity surrounding her disappearance from Bollywood, Sharma has rarely addressed the rumours about why she left the industry. Instead, she occasionally responds to fans in the comments section of her Instagram posts, where she has confirmed that she is indeed the Malini Sharma from Raaz and offered small glimpses into her life.In one such exchange, a fan wrote: “Ma’am mai Muslim hoo lekin apka bahaut bada fans hu!” Sharma replied: “I am half Muslim too... I have married a Pathan.” When the fan subsequently asked whether she was married to Priyanshu Chatterjee and whether the two were still in touch, Sharma replied: “Not at all.”

On another occasion, a fan asked whether she regretted leaving Bollywood. “Who said I left, only steered away, can steer back and away again maybe,” she replied. And when another fan suggested that she should create social media profiles under her real name because fans found it difficult to trace her, Sharma simply responded: “They’ll find me like you did.”Facing the camera again after 23 years’

Perhaps the clearest indication that Sharma has no desire to completely erase her past came when she launched The Slow Local Diaries, a video diary documenting her life at the farm. The launch video marked her return to the camera after years away. In the caption, she wrote: “Facing the camera again after very long... this time the real me, no makeup, no dialogues, shooting from the heart.”In the video, Sharma directly addressed the curiosity surrounding her disappearance.“Hi, this is Malini, facing the camera again after 23 years of Raaz. For those of you wondering where I disappeared, well, I am alive. I am here to present The Slow Local Diaries,” she said. The choice of background music was a nostalgic one — her iconic “Aapke Pyaar Mein” from Raaz.Life at the farm hasn’t meant that Sharma has completely stepped away from professional work. She recently revealed that she has taken up a work-from-home role as a relationship manager with a coffee company.Alongside this, she sells customised oils. Her farm also doubles up as a retreat. Sharma offers her 3BHK villa in the forest for monthly rentals and hosts packages that include accommodation, food and sessions with psychologists in collaboration with mental health professionals. The property also has a library and offers what she describes as a slower, quieter experience — tailor-made meals, walks and conversations away from the rush of city life.

‘I am here’When SCREEN reached out to Sharma for an interview, she made it clear that she wasn’t interetised in giving interviews. Instead, she said she would communicate through her Instagram page whenever she felt necessary. And perhaps that says more about her life today than any formal interview could.For someone who once lived under the glare of Bollywood cameras, Sharma now seems content to be known for what she is building rather than what she once was.



The pre-release event for Yash’s upcoming film Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups at Malla Reddy University in Hyderabad on Saturday evening was disrupted when a loudspeaker stand collapsed, injuring four students. According to Cyberabad Police, one student suffered a fracture while the others sustained minor injuries. A case has been registered against the organisers of the event.

‘Something came out from the bones’: Shakeela recalls terrifying cervical spine operation



Actress Shakeela underwent cervical spine surgery after years of playing games for hours on her phoneActress Shakeela underwent cervical spine surgery after years of playing games for hours on her phone.Actress Shakeela has revealed that she underwent cervical spine surgery after years of playing games for four to five hours at a stretch on her mobile and PlayStation, combined with long hours of watching videos on Instagram and YouTube.

In an interview with Milestone Makers, the actress said these habits directly caused the disc problem in her neck that eventually required an operation. ” I used to play games for 4-5 hours on the mobile and PlayStation and watched videos on Instagram and YouTube. I was

Ranveer Singh says only MoU signed for Don 3; why that may be an issue for Farhan Akhtar



The row between Ranveer Singh and Farhan Akhtar over the former’s alleged sudden, unceremonious exit from Don 3, the latter’s highly anticipated directorial, has taken a new turn. After turning to the Film Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) a few months ago didn’t bear any fruit for Farhan and his producing partner Ritesh Sidhwani’s Excel Entertainment, they recently resorted to another film body.

Ranveer Singh’s response to IMPPAAfter hearing their side of the story, the Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (IMPPA) invited Ranveer to present his side of the story. While Ranveer’s father Jagjit Singh Bhavnani agreed to meet them, the actor’s team sent the film body their response, urging IMPPA to stay out of the row, and even threatening legal action in case they don’t.A Mid-Day report claims that Ranveer threatened to sue IMPPA if they take any recourse, given they don’t enjoy any jurisdiction over the said matter. Ranveer took the same stand against the FWICE a couple of months ago, a week after the film body issued a non-cooperative directive against the actor. So, the fact that IMPPA may face similar consequences would not be surprising.

Is an MoU legally binding? The more interesting part of Ranveer’s response is his claim that there exists no “formal agreement” between him and Excel Entertainment for Don 3, but only a “Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)”. That’s why he’s insisting all film bodies to not interfere in the matter, and let Excel Entertainment go to court if they want a recourse. So, is an MoU not legally binding? Does it not hold

happy playing games and loved the experience, but the hours spent in the same position, typically lying on my side in bed, took a toll on my cervical spine over time. When the pain became severe, I visited the hospital, where doctors examined me and recommended surgery as the only effective solution.”

She agreed to the procedure after understanding that the condition would not improve without surgical intervention. During the operation, doctors inserted a titanium chip between two vertebrae and fixed it with screws, to stabilise the affected area. The surgery cost Rs 3 lakh “Something came out from between two of the bones. For that, they have now put a titanium chip and fixed it with screws,” she said, adding, “Honestly, it is an unnecessary expense. Forget the money, there is also the pain and suffering.”

She used the interaction to warn her audience about excessive phone use, particularly urging parents to monitor their children’s screen time. “Use the phone only for essential things. Avoid watching unnecessary videos, even mine, and watch only useful ones. Otherwise, you will lose Rs 3 lakh and have to endure unbearable pain as well,” she said.Who is Shakeela?Born Shakeela C Begum near Nellore in Andhra Pradesh, the actress rose to fame through softcore adult films. After a few unimpressive appearances, she played the central character in director RJ Prasad’s Kinnara Thumbikal, which became a massive blockbuster, grossing a whopping Rs 4 crore against a reported budget of just Rs 12 lakh. The movie not only earned big but also made Shakeela a pop-culture icon in Kerala, marking the beginning of the Shakeela tharangam (wave).For the next few years, the actor pretty much ruled the industry, with her films becoming bigger successes than those headlined by most men, particularly since mainstream Malayalam cinema was plagued by a serious dearth of quality work at that time. However, the Shakeela tharangam did not last long.

any enforcement powers at all? SCREEN spoke to Sanjay Vasudevan, a media and entertainment lawyer at Bay Counsel LLP, for a more informed perspective. “Without reviewing the actual MoU, together with any related correspondence and subsequent conduct of the parties, it would not be possible to make a final determination as to whether the MoU between Ranveer Singh and Excel Entertainment was legally binding. The absence of a separate long-form agreement is relevant, but it does not, by itself, mean that no enforceable contract existed,” he says.“A court would likely examine the language of the MoU, including whether it uses mandatory terms such as ‘shall’ or ‘undertakes’, whether it contains a ‘subject to contract’ qualification, and whether it specifies matters such as the actor’s role, remuneration, dates, exclusivity promotional obligations, termination rights, and consequences of withdrawal,” argues Vasudevan.

“The parties’ subsequent conduct would also be relevant, including whether an advance was paid, dates were blocked, pre-production commenced, public announcements were made, or the parties continued negotiating material commercial or creative terms,” he adds. As is known, both Excel Entertainment and Ranveer had jointly unveiled the promo of Don 3 three years ago, which even featured the actor taking on the titular role. The production house has also furnished details of the impending outdoor shoot, pre-production expenses incurred, and Farhan’s periodical communication with Ranveer before his exit, along with the relevant supporting documents.“The practical distinction is that a binding agreement may give rise to contractual remedies, including damages for proven and foreseeable losses, subject to principles of causation, remoteness, and mitigation. Depending on the terms, a party may also seek injunctive relief or other equitable remedies. However, compelling an actor to provide personal artistic services through specific performance would generally raise significant legal and practical difficulties,” points out Vasudevan.“In the film industry, it is common for an initial term sheet or MoU to be followed by a more detailed talent or artist agreement dealing with remuneration, schedules, creative approvals, publicity, credits, intellectual property, termination and liability. Whether the later agreement was merely intended to document an already concluded bargain, or was instead a precondition to any binding commitment, would depend on the wording of the MoU and the surrounding facts,” he adds.In conclusion, Ranveer’s position that only an MoU existed may be “legally significant”, most crucially “if the document expressly contemplated a future definitive agreement and left material terms unresolved”. However, that doesn’t prevent Excel Entertainment to contend that the MoU itself recorded a “concluded commitment” and the subsequent agreement was intended only to “capture operational details”. However, exact terms of the MoU would be studied in order to decide the merits of either case.

Nivin Pauly’s ‘Bethlehem Kudumba Unit’ makers issue anti-spoiler appeal

Chennai: The makers of director Girish AD’s recently released superhit Malayalam film ‘Bethlehem Kudumba Unit’, featuring actors Nivin Pauly and Mamitha Baiju in the lead, on Monday requested the public not to record or share theatre snippets and key scenes of the film on social media..Bhavana Studios, the production house that has distributed the film, issued a statement, which actor Nivin Pauly shared on his social media timelines. Sharing the statement of the production house, the actor wrote, “Request your attention!”

In its statement, the production house said, “Thank you for the global blockbuster love! We’re overwhelmed by the unprecedented bookings and the incredible joy you’re bringing to theatres.”

It then made a request. The production house said, “A humble request: Kindly avoid recording or sharing theatre snippets and key scenes on social media. Let everyone experience the magic and surprises of the film on the big screen. Let’s keep the experience special for everyone. See you at the theatres!”The film, which hit screens worldwide on August 21 this year, has gone on to emerge a superhit.

