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Narayana Murthy meets CM Revanth

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Film actor and People's Star R.Narayana Murthy paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence here on Monday. On the occasion, the Chief Minister felicitated R. Narayana Murthy with a shawl. Nalgonda MP Kunduru Raghuvver Reddy was also present. The Telangana government has decided to present State Film Awards in the name of Gaddar in April. R. Narayana Murthy is an advisor to the Committee set up by the State government to formulate the guidelines, regulations and logo for the Gaddar Awards. In this context, their meeting has assumed significance. (NSS)



June quota release of Srivari arjita seva tickets

Tirumala, March 17 (NSS): TTD will release the June month quota of Suprabhatam, Tomala, Archana and Astadala Pada Padmaradhana Seva tickets on March 18 at 10 am online. The Online registration for lucky dip registration of these Seva tickets can be carried out from March 18 till 10am of March 20. Devotees who got these tickets through Lucky Dip will be allotted the tickets if they pay the amount before 12 noon of March 22. The June month quota of Kalyanotsavam, Unjal Seva, Arjitha Brahmotsavam and Sahasra Deepalankara Seva tickets will be released on March 21 at 10 am. Tickets will be made available to devotees on March 21 at 11 am to participate in the Srivari Jyeshthabishekam, which will be held from June 9 to 11. TTD will release the virtual sevās and their darshan slots on March 21 at 3 pm.

TPCC chief urges BJP, BRS to join with Congress for nationwide caste census



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): TPCC President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud has urged leaders from the BJP and BRS to collaborate with the Congress party in advocating for a nationwide caste census by the Union government. While addressing the Legislative Council on Monday, Mahesh Kumar Goud described the introduction of the BC Reservation Bill as a significant milestone, asserting that true social justice for marginalised and disadvantaged groups can only be achieved through the efforts of the Congress party. He emphasised, "The BC community will hold the BRS and BJP accountable if they refuse to support the Congress in bringing forth this pivotal BC Bill. If BJP leaders genuinely wish to advocate for the rights of BCs, they must persuade their party leadership to endorse this initiative at the national level." Mahesh Kumar Goud also highlighted that the Congress government is dedicated to ensuring 42 percent reservation for BCs in local body elections, as well as in education and employment, to fulfill their promise of justice for these communities. (NSS)

PM Modi-Christopher Luxon meeting: India, New Zealand ink defence pact

GNS News Agency, March 17

India and New Zealand on Monday (March 17, 2025) inked a mega pact to institutionalise their defence and security ties even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed concerns to his Kiwi counterpart over certain unlawful elements carrying out anti-India activities in the Pacific island nation. Mr. Modi and visiting New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon held wide-ranging talks with a focus on ramping up overall bilateral ties, especially in areas of trade, defence, education and agriculture.

In his media statement, Mr. Modi said both sides decided to strengthen and institutionalise defence and security partnership and a roadmap will be prepared



for cooperation in the defence industry sector. "We both are unanimous against terrorism. Whether it is the Christchurch terrorist attack of March 15, 2019, or the Mumbai attack of November 26, 2008, terrorism in any form is unacceptable," he said. The Prime Minister said strict action is necessary against those guilty of terrorist attacks. "We will continue to cooperate together

and New Zealand deciding to start negotiations for a mutually beneficial free trade pact. "This will boost the potential of mutual trade and investment. Mutual cooperation and investment will be encouraged in areas like dairy, food processing, and pharma," he said. Mr. Modi said India and New Zealand support a free, open and secure Indo-Pacific. "We believe in the policy of development, not expansionism," he said. The New Zealand Prime Minister said Mr. Modi and he discussed a challenging strategic outlook in the Indo-Pacific. "I reiterated our strong commitment to address shared concerns over our respective interests in contributing to a prosperous Indo-Pacific," Mr. Luxon said.

CM defends Govt's decision to change name of Potti Sriramulu Telugu University



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has supported the State government's choice to rename the Potti Sriramulu Telugu University in honour of Suravaram Pratap Reddy. In response to Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who has vehemently criticised the government's decision to rename the university in the outside Assembly, the Chief Minister explained that the State government had made several policy decisions as part of its administration, acknowledging the contributions of notable individuals in the establishment of Telangana. This process has been ongoing for a decade since the establishment of Telangana State. Furthermore, having two universities with the same name could lead to administrative confusion. This is why we are renaming universities and institutions in Telangana. It is not intended as a slight to any individuals," clarified Revanth Reddy in the Assembly on Monday. The Chief Minister noted that in keeping with this tradition, the State government has renamed Potti Sriramulu Telugu University to

honour Suravaram Pratap Reddy and adjusted the names of several universities that retained their old designations from Andhra Pradesh. "I find myself questioning whether it is the realm of politics that is corrupted or the perception of political leaders. The contributions and sacrifices of Potti Sriramulu should never be undervalued. It is crucial for everyone to acknowledge and remember his sacrifices. Regrettably, some political groups are attempting to sow confusion among certain communities. Such behavior is unbecoming of leaders in prominent positions," Revanth Reddy said. The Chief Minister also pointed out that the State government had honoured Kaloji by naming the NTR Health University after him, emphasizing that this does not equate to disrespecting NTR. He further noted that the Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University was named in honour of Professor Jayashankar, the YSR Horticulture University has been renamed Konda Laxman Babuji, and Venkateswara University has been named in memory of former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. The Chief Minister remarked that while the Gujarat government chose to honor Prime Minister Modi by naming the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel cricket stadium after him, the Congress government in Telangana has refrained from making such errors. Revanth Reddy suggested, "We should name the Cherlapally Railway Terminal in memory of Potti Sriramulu. Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay need to demonstrate their commitment by obtaining the necessary approval from the Center." The Chief Minister further mentioned that the Balkampet Nature Cure Hospital should be named in honor of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister K. Rosaiah and announced that the government plans to unveil a statue of Rosaiah to acknowledge his significant contributions.

Wheelchair incident: Govt to issue show cause notice to Air India



GNS News Agency, March 17

New Delhi: Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Monday informed the Rajya Sabha that the Ministry was looking into the complaint of non-availability of a pre-booked wheelchair for Air India to an 82-year-old woman passenger at Delhi airport, and a show cause notice will be issued to the airline. Replying to supplementaries during question hour in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister said aviation regulator DGCA has spoken to the family of the passenger and the airlines, and is looking into the CCTV footage to ascertain what exactly had happened. Noting that it was a "very unfortunate incident", he said the Ministry had immediately taken cognisance of it and is looking into the incident. In civil aviation guidelines, every airline has to provide wheelchair support to whoever requires it. "Regarding this incident, we are going in-depth and verifying as to what exactly happened. There are always two different versions, one is from the family and the DGCA has spoken to the family members and taken their story, and from the airlines. "We are issuing a show cause notice to the airline. We will be taking action as per the show cause notice, whatever we get. We are taking the CCTV

footage to find out exactly what has happened. I can assure the member that we are looking into the issue," Naidu said. After a complaint about non-availability of a pre-booked wheelchair that resulted in the fall of an elderly woman passenger at the Delhi airport, Air India had said that wheelchair or assistance was not denied to the passenger at any point in time and first aid was given immediately. The incident happened on March 4 at the Delhi airport, and the passenger later boarded the flight to Bengaluru. In a post on X, the granddaughter of the 82-year-old passenger said her grandmother was treated poorly by the airline and claimed that she was not allocated a wheelchair for almost an hour. As per the post on March 7, the passenger managed to enter the airport on foot, but still, no wheelchair or assistance was provided, and she suffered a fall. Issuing a detailed statement after investigating the incident.

KTR meets arrested women journalists at Chanchalguda jail

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): BRS party working president KTR visited journalists Revathi and Tanvi Yadav at Chanchalguda central prison along with the party leaders today. Speaking on the occasion, he said the people were under the illusion that the Indiramma Rajyam mentioned by the Congress meant a welfare state and added that they were under the illusion that the Congress government would implement more welfare schemes than KCR. "But looking at the Revanth Reddy government's style of conduct today, Indiramma Rajyam is reminiscent of the Emergency days. Is Indiramma Rajyam just about putting girls in jail on illegal cases? People all feel that the Congress government has cheated them.

CM Revanth launches 'Rajiv Yuva Vikasam'



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy launched a new initiative called "Rajiv Yuva Vikasam" on the Assembly premises on Monday. This scheme aims to offer financial support to unemployed youth from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Classes (BC), and Minority groups in Telangana. During the event, Revanth Reddy noted that those who qualify under the Rajiv Yuva Vikasam scheme would receive financial aid ranging from Rs.50,000 to Rs.4 lakhs. He mentioned, "The government plans to release the list of beneficiaries on June 2, with the new initiative expected to assist between 4,000 and 5,000 individuals in each Assembly constituency. This scheme is intended for those who are genuinely unemployed." The Chief Minister emphasised that the People's government has upheld transparency in job recruitment and teacher transfers to minimise any potential irregularities. He remarked, "It is crucial that the schemes are executed transparently to ensure we provide effective governance to the people. Rajiv Yuva Vikasam is not limited to our party; it is a scheme for the people." (NSS)

KTR tears into Revanth Reddy over Congress government's flop show



GNS News Agency, March 17

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Monday lashed out at the Congress government, calling it a monumental failure after Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy admitted to a staggering Rs 71,000 crore shortfall in the 2024-25 budget estimates. Terming this a historic humiliation for Telangana, he blamed the Congress government for admitting to financial mismanagement even before presenting the State budget. In an informal media interaction at the Assembly on Monday, Rama Rao attributed Telangana's financial decline to Revanth Reddy's faulty policies. "The Chief Minister himself has confirmed the bitter truth - Telangana is not rising but falling. His decisions have crippled agriculture, industry and investments. If the economy was truly growing, why has revenue plummeted?" he asked, charging the Congress with sabotaging Telangana's progress out of political vendetta. Stating that the closure of the Kaleshwaram project was driven by hatred for former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao rather than practical reasons, he said this move had crippled agriculture and shattered the rural economy. The BRS leader ridiculed Revanth Reddy's claims of strong ties with the Centre, questioning what Telangana had gained from it. "What has he brought from Delhi besides empty rhetoric? His meetings with the Central Ministers yielded no benefits. If Telangana was handed over as a state of gold, Revanth has reduced it to rubble, calling it a 'cancer' on public platforms," he remarked, adding that in its attempts to erase Chandrashekar Rao's legacy, the Congress government had destroyed agriculture and allied sectors.

"In their desperate attempt to undo everything the BRS achieved, they are destroying livelihoods and rural economy," he said. Also charging the Congress regime with corruption, he said Revanth Reddy was diverting State funds to the Congress high command. "The Chief Minister is busy sending funds to Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and KC Venugopal while Telangana suffers," he said, questioning the silence of both the Congress and BJP on BJP MLA T. Raja Singh's allegations of secret meetings between BJP and Congress leaders. The BRS working president criticised Revanth Reddy's focus on gossip rather than governance. "We don't care about his Delhi visits or meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. What matters is what Telangana has gained, and the answer is nothing," he stated, also alleging that the Chief Minister was ruining Telangana with his incompetence and realising the allegations of the Andhra rulers during State formation. He also questioned Rahul Gandhi's silence on the alleged atrocities under Revanth Reddy's government. Demanding a response on the TDR (Transferable Development Rights) scam involving a group of realtors, he pointed to ongoing protests by University of Hyderabad students against the auction of 400 acres of TGIC lands. Slamming the Congress government's priorities, Rama Rao ridiculed its plans to host the Miss World beauty pageant as a priority amid a power crisis and an agricultural downturn. "He scrapped the Formula-E event, causing a Rs.46 crore loss, but is ready to spend Rs 250 crore on a pageant," he said, vowing that the next BRS government would probe the financial loss caused by the Congress's hasty decision to cancel the Formula-E event. Criticising Revanth Reddy's crackdown on journalists, the former Minister said, "When YouTubers supported him, they were journalists."

Will strive hard till 42 percent reservation for BCs is achieved: CM Revanth

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has emphasised his commitment to achieving 42 percent reservation for Backward Classes (BCs), stating that he will not be passive until this goal is attained. He also mentioned that the state government is dedicated to implementing the Kamareddy Declaration, which was made by the Congress party during the Telangana Assembly elections. While addressing the Assembly on the introduction of the Telangana Backward Classes Bill, 2025 on Monday, the Chief Minister assured, "As the leader of the House, I promise to take decisive actions to secure 42 percent BC reservation. I urge all political leaders to unite and approach the Prime Minister regarding this matter." He also asserted that the BC census report is fully accurate and stressed that it is everyone's duty to support the BC bill in Parliament. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi pledged to increase the reservation for Backward Classes (BC) to 42 percent if the Congress party were to come to power in Telangana. Shortly after taking office, the People's government initiated a BC caste census on February 4, 2024, which has now been completed. After gathering feedback from various groups, the state government introduced a bill aimed at providing a 42 percent reservation for BCs. We appreciate everyone who has supported the government during this momentous occasion," said Revanth Reddy. He explained that the previous government had proposed raising the BC reservation to 37 percent. However, the current Congress administration is withdrawing that proposal and instead submitting a new one for 42 percent reservation for BCs in education, employment, and political representation. The Chief Minister further requested Union Ministers-Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay and BJP floor leader Maheshwar Reddy to take the responsibility of seeking an appointment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. (NSS)

KCR is not worthy of being Father of Telangana: CM Revanth

Station Ghanpur, March 16 (NSS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has dismissed the assertion made by BRS MLA Harish Rao, who claimed that former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is the "father" of Telangana. Revanth Reddy stated that KCR lacks the credentials necessary for such a comparison. Speaking at a public meeting for the Praja Palana-Pragathi Bhata event in Station Ghanpur in Jangaon district on Sunday, the Chief Minister questioned, "Can the true father of the nation recognise the scent of alcohol, and would this supposed Father of the Nation even function without the aroma of alcohol?" He emphasised that the genuine fathers of Telangana are Konda Laxman Babuji and Jayashankar, asserting that KCR can never hold this title due to his alleged involvement in massive financial corruption and his reported drinking habits. "KCR, who has taken advantage of the people, cannot be considered the Father of Telangana. The true Father of the Nation dedicates his life to serving Dalit communities, while KCR currently enjoys the comforts of his farmhouse. The BRS leader lacks the qualifications to be compared to the Father of Telangana," Revanth Reddy remarked. The Chief Minister stated that former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao left a debt of Rs.8.29 lakh crore for the people of Telangana. In just one year, the current Congress government has already repaid Rs. 1.53 lakh crore in both interest and principal on the debts incurred. It is important for the public to understand the financial status of Telangana," he added.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

HP's waste woes

The Himachal Pradesh government's proposed Policy for Solid Waste Management Facilities in Rural Areas, 2024, though a welcome move, raises pressing concerns about the state's overall waste management strategy. Aiming to streamline waste segregation and disposal at the panchayat level, the policy must be expedited as HP is already grappling with a waste crisis, exacerbated by ineffective execution of past plans. The data is staggering. The state generates approximately 375 tonnes of solid waste daily across 60 urban local bodies (ULBs). The legacy waste backlog stands at over 2.48 lakh tonnes, with only six of the 16 identified sites having been cleared. Meanwhile, the National Green Tribunal has flagged a 9.6-MLD (million litres per day) shortfall in sewage treatment capacity and 20 ULBs still lack sewage management facilities. Shockingly, while some sewage treatment plants are overloaded, a significant proportion of households remain disconnected, exposing a critical flaw in planning.

The government has signed pacts with cement manufacturers for co-processing non-recyclable plastic waste, but this remains a limited solution. A large proportion of plastic waste—from shampoo bottles to chips packets—continues to clog water bodies and urban landscapes. While over four lakh rural households still await access to proper wet waste disposal, the sheer volume of accumulating garbage suggests that incremental measures will not suffice.

A long-term, action-oriented strategy is needed—one that includes mandatory waste segregation at source, expansion of waste-to-energy projects, stricter plastic production regulations and comprehensive recycling initiatives. The recently announced environmental cell within the Urban Development Department must act decisively to bridge policy gaps. Himachal's fragile ecology cannot withstand poor waste management.

2 women journalists, who aired content critical of Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, granted bail

Revanth Reddy On Monday afternoon, former minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi MLA K T Rama Rao along with party leaders visited Pogadadanda and Yadav at Chanchalguda Central Prison for women. A local court in Hyderabad Monday granted bail to two YouTube journalists who were arrested on March 12 for airing abusive and derogatory content against Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. Rejecting the police custody of Revathi Pogadadanda, 44, and Tanvi Yadav alias Bandi Sandhya, 25, the judge granted bail to them with a personal bond of Rs 25,000 and two sureties. Pogadadanda and Yadav of the YouTube channel Pulse Digital News Network were arrested under sections 67 of the IT Act, and sections 111, 61(2), 353(2), and 352 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Pogadadanda's advocate Jakkula Lakshman said she was granted bail as the investigation into the case was complete. He said the court had issued a show cause notice to the Hyderabad cyber crime police station, to which no explanation has been filed so far. He alleged that the police misbehaved with the two women journalists. On Monday afternoon, former minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi MLA K T Rama Rao along with party leaders visited Pogadadanda and Yadav at Chanchalguda Central Prison for women.

Speaking to the media, Rao claimed that as many as 11 journalists have been jailed by the Congress government since it assumed office in December 2023. He said Pogadadanda and Yadav were arrested for showing public anger against the government. Pogadadanda's Pulse Digital aired a short clip of a farmer talking about the Congress government's failure to fulfil several of its election promises including the Rs 4,000 pension and the Rythu Bharosa scheme. Pogadadanda and Yadav were arrested after a Congress party activist lodged a complaint. Revanth Reddy spoke about the content in the Telangana Assembly, and said people posing as journalists to post "vicious campaigns" against public representatives and their family members "should be stripped and paraded in public". Calling for strict legal action against such online content, Reddy also accused the rival Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) of paying them to record the video and post it online. The police claimed that the alleged video was shot at the head office of the BRS in Banjara Hills in February, and released on March 10 as per an orchestrated plan to defame the chief minister ahead of the Budget Session of the Assembly.

BRS MLA raises student suicide attempt incident in assembly

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): BRS party MLA Prabhakar Reddy today raised the issue of the suicide attempt by a class sixth student in a BC hostel in his Dubbaka assembly constituency in the State assembly.

Speaking during a discussion on Diet Charges and Cosmetic Charges, he said the student, who committed suicide had been in a coma for the last two days. Prabhakar Reddy fired in the House that this news was suppressed without coming out anywhere. In this context, Minister Seethakka gave a strong counter to Prabhakar Reddy on the student's suicide attempt. She fired by saying that the student committed suicide due to personal reasons. She said it should not be attributed to the State government. She also said the student, who attempted suicide was being treated by doctors at Nilofar Hospital. She asked the BRS party not to politicize the issue by saying that the hostels were good during their rule. She said there was no need for the government to suppress the student's suicide during the ten years of KCR's rule. Seethakka countered by saying that a report will be brought in on the Dubbaka hostel student incident and a thorough investigation will be conducted. She explained that the implementation of the increase in diet charges and cosmetic charges. She said after 16 years, cosmetic charges had been increased by 212% in the Indiramma government. "I also studied in the ST Girls Hostel in Mulugu. Even though the opportunities were few at that time, many people studied with perseverance and reached the highest positions.

It is Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the Congress party that has spoken inappropriately and disrespectfully towards Dalit leaders and representatives of the Dalit public.



KTR Sena District President Veesam Bharat Reddy Hanumakonda, March 17, Indian Chronicle: "KTR Sena district president Veesam Bharat Reddy said that former minister Jagadish Reddy did not speak a single word on his speaker and this suspension is illegal and unjust. "It is a proof of the autocratic policies of the Congress that the traditions of the assembly have not been violated anywhere, that the Congress government has been suspended for questioning the failures of the assembly as a witness. In the same way, it is the Congress party that has spoken inappropriately to the Dalits or the representatives of the Dalit public. They criticized the Congress party for being under the illusion that they are still in the opposition to fulfill their promises.

Rules regarding cancellation of reserved tickets for fully cancelled trains

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Indian Railways has laid down specified norms for the procedure of cancellation and refund of fare with regard to reserved tickets during disruption of train services. In this regard, the rules regarding cancellation of reserved tickets for fully cancelled trains is reiterated below: As per the Railway Refund Rules, in case of full cancellation of a train due to accidents, breaches, floods, Bandh or Rail roko and so on in unavoidable circumstances, the reservation ticket booked through PRS counter should be surrendered at PRS counter of any railway station within three days of the scheduled departure of the train. On submission of the same, full fare paid is refundable to the passenger for the entire journey without any cancellation charges. In case of tickets booked through online means i.e., e-ticket, the ticket will be cancelled automatically and the full refund of fare will be processed through IRCTC and credited to the concerned bank account. During unavoidable situations, the change in pattern of train services arises due to unusual incidents like flood situation due to heavy rains, Law & order situations like bandh, Rail Roko and so on, Railways are compelled to cancel the train services to provide safety and security to the passengers. In the recent times, Indian Railways is carrying out various infrastructural works in large scale, while carrying out such works, Railways ensures that the work is carried out with least inconvenience to the rail passengers, due to the necessity, pattern of train services needs to be changed in



the form of cancellation, diversion, to facilitate the infra development works. In such instances, the information regarding the change in the pattern of train services will be conveyed to the rail users through Print Media, Electronic Media, Social Media and text messages to mobile of the passengers. It is advised to provide the mobile numbers of the bonafide passengers only, while booking the tickets. Hence, SCR appeals to the rail users to note the stipulations of refund rules and in case of full cancellation of train services, the reservation ticket should be surrendered at PRS counter of any nearby station within three days of scheduled departure of the train for claiming full refund. (NSS)

IIT Hyderabad to celebrate F C Kohli Day on March 19



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Kohli Centre on Intelligent Systems (KCIS) at International Institute of Information Technology Hyderabad (IIITH) will be marking F C Kohli's birth anniversary on March 19 with a special program celebrating his life through research and

innovation. The Kohli Centre on Intelligent Systems (KCIS), named after F.C. Kohli, houses all the AI research groups in the institute. Fifty faculty and 500 researchers constitute one of the largest research groups in the country. Ranging from language technologies, computer vision, robotics, cognitive sciences and advanced machine learning, with applications in several domains including mobility and healthcare. The Centre celebrates its anniversary on March 19, the birth day of F.C. Kohli. Kohli Day is an annual event recognizing the faculty, researchers, and the Centre's work, all inspired by the visionary tech leader. The annual event, which has been celebrated every year since 2021, will from this year include an annual keynote Kohli Day lecture. The inaugural lecture this year is by Dr. D. Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman AIG Hospitals, where he will share his insights on AI & Healthcare - Opportunities and Challenges. This year, on Kohli Day, IIITH will also be inaugurating the Centre for Digital Technologies in Healthcare (CDiTH). A translation lab established to apply modern digital technologies to enhance the efficacy and economy of healthcare delivery for real-world impact in India and the world by effectively bridging academic research and clinical practice. With AIG hospital as a principal partner, Dr Reddy will be inaugurating the centre. The event will take place on March 19, at 4 to 6pm, KRB auditorium, IIIT Hyderabad campus, and will also be live-streamed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzzrosz32xw>. (NSS)

MLC Amer Ali Khan demands special law to protect minorities in Telangana



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Congress MLC Amer Ali Khan on Monday urged the Telangana government to introduce special legislation to curb the rising attacks on minorities. Raising the issue as a Special Mention in the Telangana Legislative Council, Amer Ali Khan expressed concern over the increasing incidents of violence against minorities and called for immediate action to safeguard their rights. He said while the Congress government in Telangana

was sincerely working for the welfare of minorities, sporadic incidents of attacks were creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. He pointed out that even small incidents were escalating into targeted assaults against minorities, raising concerns about their safety and dignity. The Congress leader alleged that a political party from North India was deliberately spreading communal venom in Telangana, attempting to disrupt the State's social harmony. He warned that if such attempts were not curtailed in time, Telangana could witness a rise in communal tensions. To prevent this, he proposed the enactment of a Minorities Atrocities (Prevention) Act, which would provide strict legal provisions to curb such attacks and ensure swift justice for victims. Amer Ali Khan also referred to the upcoming Backward Classes (BC) Reservation Bill and urged the State government to ensure that Muslims under the BC-E category also receive its benefits. He emphasised that the inclusion of BC-E Muslims in the reservation framework was crucial for their socio-economic development and uplift. He reiterated that the Congress government must take proactive steps to protect minorities and uphold Telangana's legacy of communal harmony. (NSS)

AIMIM MLAs stage walk-out from assembly

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): AIMIM members walked out of the Telangana Legislative Assembly today. The party members came out protesting the way the assembly was being run. On the occasion, Majlis MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi expressed his anger over the State government's behaviour. The government has failed to run the Legislative Assembly. Will they murder democracy in the Assembly? This is not Gandhi Bhavan, but Telangana Legislative Assembly," Akbaruddin commented. Akbaruddin Owaisi flagged the Congress government in a strong manner. Owaisi expressed his anger over the conduct of the assembly. Owaisi criticized the ruling party for allocating more

time to the Opposition party without giving them a chance to speak. In the assembly, MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi said if they want to speak in the assembly, they were not given the mic. "It is not good for the ruling party to do this. This government has completely failed in running the assembly. They are not answering the questions asked by the members. They are also changing the questions. They are killing democracy. We are walking out of this assembly to protest the behaviour of the Congress government. This is not Gandhi Bhavan. We should remember that this is an assembly. Run the assembly like an assembly. Not like Gandhi Bhavan," suggested MLC Owaisi. (NSS)

BJP MLAs oppose renaming OU after Poet Suravaram Pratap Reddy



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): BJP MLAs today opposed the State government's resolution to rename Pottu Sri Ramulu Telugu University as Suravaram Pratap Reddy Telugu University. The BJP members opposed the name change of Pottu Sreeramulu University in Nampally in Hyderabad. They suggested that the name of Osmania University should be replaced with Suravaram Pratap Reddy. Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha introduced a bill in the assembly to change the name of Pottu Sreeramulu Telugu University after the name of prominent poet and activist Suravaram Pratap Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, BJP MLA Aleti Maheshwar Reddy asked the State government to change the name of Osmania University to Suravaram Pratap Reddy but not change the name of Pottu Sreeramulu University. BJP MLA Dhanapal Surya Narayana remarked that the name change of Pottu Sreeramulu University was an irrational action. "Pottu Sreeramulu is not a leader limited to a region. He was a person who fought for the rights of Dalits. The name Suravaram should be given to Osmania University. As the Chief Minister mentioned, there is no Pottu Sreeramulu University in Andhra Pradesh. There is no university in the country with the name Pottu Sreeramulu," said MLA Surya Narayana. (NSS)

CT offers one-time interest waiver to taxpayers

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): K. Haritha, IAS, Commissioner, Commercial Taxes, Telangana appealed to all the taxpayers to avail of the one-time interest and waiver scheme being offered by the Government by paying the tax demands by March 31, 2025.

Addressing a gathering of over 300 delegates comprising industry members, advocates, CAs, CMAs and tax professionals Commissioner of Commercial Taxes explained to them the benefits of the interest waiver scheme introduced by the Government for the four FYs 2017-18 to 2020-21 and urged them to avail the scheme as merely payment of full tax demand is enough for a complete waiver of interest and penalty. To avail of the scheme, taxpayers must pay the tax demand by March 31, 2025, subject to other conditions. Haritha urged the taxpayers to come forward in big numbers where tax demands are due for these years and pay the tax demands at the earliest to avoid technical glitches resulting from the last-minute rush. (NSS)

Arrest of journalists stark reminder of hypocrisy on freedom of expression: Harish Rao



Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Former minister Harish Rao has said the Congress Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's vulgar comments on the floor of the House demonstrate his disregard for democracy and freedom of expression. Rahul Gandhi's statements on the importance of free expression ring hollow when his own party government is stifling dissent and silencing critics. The Congress party's double standards on freedom of expression clearly indicate their lack of commitment to democratic values, Harish Rao added. (NSS)

Minister Seethakka & former minister Kamalakar engage in war of words

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Former minister and the BRS party MLA Gangula Kamalakar today engaged in war of words with Panchayat Raj Minister D. Seethakka over the implementation of BR Ambedkar Overseas Scholarship scheme in the State assembly. He stated the scheme, which was started by KCR government, to provide 20 lakh for foreign education of the students of the State, was not being implemented ever since the Revanth Reddy government came to power in Telangana. He presented the details of the scheme available on the State government's website in the assembly. He mentioned that not a single person from BC, ST, or minorities had received the benefit under the scheme and added that only a few SC individuals had received the benefit under the scheme so far. Stating that he was talking about the government details, he sent the relevant downloaded document to the assembly Speaker. Gangula accused the government of providing a completely negligent response. Reacting to the sharp comments of Kamalakar, Minister Seethakka claimed that the former was hell bent politicising the issue. The minister explained that they were clearing the pending issues. "We have already released Rs 167 crore. We will also release the remaining ? 25 crore. The scheme is an ongoing scheme," the minister said and urged the former minister not to politicize the education sector of the State.

Congress bans protests in OU, KTR exposes Rahul & Congress' Hypocrisy



Hyderabad, March 16 (NSS): BRS working president K. Taraka Rama Rao (KTR) strongly condemned the Telangana Congress government's decision to ban protests at Osmania University, calling it a direct attack on democracy. He questioned whether this was the "spirit of democracy" that Rahul Gandhi and the Congress had repeatedly spoken about while advocating for the right to protest. "Is this the democratic right of protest that Rahul Gandhi and the Congress claimed to uphold? If Congress truly believed in democracy, why is it resorting to authoritarian measures to silence student voices?" KTR asked.

Slamming the Congress' double standards, KTR reminded the public that the party, during its election campaign, had promised the right to protest as part of its 'Seventh Guarantee.' However, in just over a year, the same Congress government had betrayed that promise by imposing restrictions on student protests.

KTR also pointed out the repeated instances of BJP-led Union and State governments cracking down on student movements in universities across the country. He accused the Congress of following the same dictatorial approach in Telangana, proving that it was no different from the BJP when it came to suppressing dissent.

"Suppressing student voices is a clear symbol of dictatorship. The Congress government in Telangana is now revealing its true colours by curbing students' fundamental right to protest. Osmania University, which played a crucial role in the Telangana movement, is now being turned into a prison under this oppressive rule," he said and criticized the government's misplaced priorities, highlighting that instead of addressing serious issues like contaminated food in university hostels, where students recently found insects and even razor blades in their meals, the Congress government was focused on crushing student dissent. KTR warned that the Congress government's undemocratic actions would not go unchallenged and that students and people of Telangana would soon give a fitting response to its betrayal. He reaffirmed that BRS would stand by students and fight against any attempt to suppress their voices. (NSS)

Language research results should be taken to field level: Venkaiah Naidu

Hyderabad, March 16 (NSS): Former Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu today said Language research results should be taken to the field level. He said there should be respect for all languages along with admiration and love for the mother tongue. Naidu, along with the head of the Telugu department of Banaras Hindu University Acharya Budati Venkateswarlu, released the book 'Sahityamlo Patrala Srujana Sangriya' at his residence in Hyderabad on Sunday. Remembering the immortal Potti Sriramulu on his birth anniversary, he said preserving the Telugu language was the true tribute to Potti Sriramulu. He said everyone should speak in their mother tongue. He said many great people had served the Telugu language and suggested that universities should undertake research to bring their efforts to light and that research books should be available in a language that the common man can understand. "If language is lost, it is my firm belief that breathing is lost. In this regard, comprehensive research and opinion polls should be conducted at the university level, he added.



Naidu also said research was not only about uncovering information that is not available, but also about providing it comprehensively to future generations. He suggested that adulteration was not good in any matter. He wanted literature to come out with pure, clear Telugu words. He suggested that Telugu language professors, scholars, and teachers should encourage their students, organize literary gatherings and encourage students to participate in them, and use social media to take them to the masses. He wanted the society to recognize and respect Telugu language scholars. He said once even those who did not study Telugu poems used to sing, and now even those who have studied cannot understand them. He said that the focus should be on what to do to bring about a change in this situation. Potti Sri R Ramulu Telugu University Vice Chancellor Acharya Veludanda Nityananda Rao, former President Acharya SV Satyanarayana, Director of the Center for Advanced Study of Ancient Telugu Acharya Madabhushi Sampath Kumar, Head of the Telugu Department of Hyderabad Central University Acharya Pillamarri Ramulu, Journalist Rentala Jayadev, Telugu Lecturer Yadagiri and others participated in the program. (NSS)

BEFI Telangana holds Intl working women's Day at RBI



Hyderabad, March 16 (NSS): Bank Employees Federation Of India (BEFI) Telangana organized International Working Women's Day - 2025 on Sunday at RBI, Hyderabad premises. Justice Dr Radha Rani, of High Court of Telangana, was chief guest on the occasion. She expressed her happiness for organising such huge gathering of women bank employees on a holiday. She explained that due to reservations in employment, Ladies elevated to come up in the services in different fields including judiciary. She also suggested families to encourage ladies to come up in the career. She opined that the domestic violence is more prevalent along with sexual harassment in work places. She suggested to demand formation of Internal Committees against sexual abuse in work places. Chethana, High Court Lawyer on the occasion dealt with various aspects of POSH Act. S. Venkateswara Reddy, Secretary General, All India Regional Rural Bank Employees Association (AIRRBEA) explained that women workers are more in the banking industry. The genuine demands of the customers are increasing but due to shortage of staff in the industry, the present employees are with stress and strain. He called upon the women employees to organize themselves and participate in more numbers in the trade union activities.

M. Padmasri, Secretary, CITU Telangana State Committee explained the origin of International Women's Day and its evolution. The first women convention of BEFI-Telangana unanimously adopted the declaration to organize themselves systematically with a view to achieve unity and also realize their immediate demands viz., Recruitment of staff and regularization of temporary employees, social security measures, halt sexual harassment at work places, crèche facilities, separate restrooms for lady employees, etc., After deliberations a "Sub-Committee of Women Employees" with Smt. R. Divya as Convenor and 14 others from various banks. The Convention was successfully organized with the enthusiastic efforts of M.V. Harish Babu, Joint Secretary, BEFI, T. Satish, President, BEFI-Telangana, P. Srinivas, GS, Union Bank Employees Union, Telangana, K. Gangadhar, Dy.GS, BEFI-Telangana. C. Srujana, Treasurer, RBI Employees Association. (NSS)

Scientific Program of SOPPA held at KIMS

Hyderabad, March 16 (NSS): A half-a-day Scientific Program of the Society of Perioperative Physician Anaesthesiologists (SOPPA) held at KIMS Hospital on Minister Road, Secunderabad on Sunday. India's first "Society of Perioperative Physician Anaesthesiologists" (SOPPA) was formed in Hyderabad in August 2024. SOPPA is the first of its kind in the country, is officially registered and authorised, and now organises the scientific program. The

SOPPA. Dr Raja Narsing Rao, Secretary of SOPPA, said an Anesthesiologist is a perioperative physician who manages a patient's care before, during, and after surgery. They are responsible for the patient's overall medical management throughout the perioperative period, he said. Prof (Dr) Manimala Rao delivered a Foundational Lecture. Prof (Dr) N Satyanarayana, President of SOPPA spoke on 'Expanded Role of Anaesthesiologist as a Perioperative Physician'.

Dr Raja Narsing Rao, currently, the common practice in hospital said for surgeons to refer patients with comorbidities to specialists such as general physicians, cardiologists, or pulmonologists to assess their fitness for surgery. These specialists evaluate fitness based solely on disease severity, often without considering anesthetic drugs, their interactions, potential complications, or the impact of different anesthetic techniques on comorbid conditions. In contrast, anesthesiologists, due to their physician training, are well-versed in the medications used for comorbid conditions and their interactions with anesthetic drugs, he added. Dr Sunil Pandya said the Perioperative medicine is increasingly recognized as a critical component of patient care, aiming to optimize outcomes by managing medical conditions throughout the surgical journey. (NSS)



association of Anaesthesiologists was formed with over 120 Anaesthesiologists in the city. The scientific program's objective was to authenticate and validate standards laid down by SOPPA for a perioperative physician acceptance by the medical fraternity particularly surgeons, NMC to consider anaesthesiologists as competent physicians. Acceptance as a capable perioperative physician in the eyes of the court of law, stated Dr S. Kalyani, while unveiling the objectives and goals of

Konda Surekha urges CM Revanth to develop Warangal as tourist destination



Station Ghanapur, March 16 (NSS): The Minister for Endowments, Konda Surekha, emphasised the numerous opportunities available for tourism development in the Warangal district, urging Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to take proactive steps to position the area as a premier tourism destination. On Sunday, Konda Surekha, alongside

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, visited the Station Ghanapur Assembly constituency in Jangaon district, where they participated in various foundation stone ceremonies and development initiatives. During the visit, seven RTC buses allocated under the Mahila Shakti scheme were distributed to self-help groups. In her remarks, Minister Konda Surekha highlighted the historical significance of the Warangal region, which was once governed by influential figures such as Rani Rudrama Devi and Sammakka-Sarakka, and noted the potential for developing numerous key tourist sites. She also expressed concerns regarding the lack of cooperation from the Archaeology department regarding necessary actions in the area, appealing to the Chief Minister for his attention to this issue. The state government is genuinely focused on the development of the combined Warangal district. Numerous projects, such as an airport and a textile park, are on the horizon. I am confident that, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Warangal district will undergo a significant transformation in the near future," Surekha stated. (NSS)

Tummadihatti works to resume this summer, Sitarama LIP expedited: Uttam

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N. Uttam Kumar Reddy reaffirmed the Telangana government's commitment to reviving and constructing the Tummadihatti Project. "I and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will visit Maharashtra next month to meet its CM and irrigation officials to discuss and finalise the levels. This summer, we will resume the works at Tummadihatti," he declared. The Minister was responding to a series of questions on the Tummadihatti and Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project (LIP) during the Question Hour in the Telangana Legislative Council on Monday. He assured that the Pranahitha-Chevella project would be completed at the earliest and confirmed that the government is committed to constructing the project at Tummadihatti, and discussions with Maharashtra's leadership will ensure a smooth finalisation of technical aspects. In response to a query, the Minister informed that pump houses were not built at the proper height, making them vulnerable to submergence during heavy floods. He further stated that various alternative proposals regarding the Tummadihatti project's role in supplying water to Yellampalli are still under examination. Replying to a query on the Sitarama Lift Irrigation Project (SRLIP), Uttam Kumar Reddy said that work is in progress. The main canal has been completed up to 104 km out of the total 114 km, including three pump houses. Moreover, 50 percent of the Sathupally Trunk Canal and 32 percent of the Palair Link Canal have been completed, he said.



The Minister explained that the estimated project cost had increased from Rs 13,057 crore to Rs 19,465 crore due to several factors. Uttam Kumar Reddy reaffirmed that Sitarama Sagar is a prestigious project for the Telangana Government, and all necessary steps are being taken for its early completion. Replying to a different question, he informed the Legislative Council that Telangana produced 156.20 LMTs of paddy during the Kharif Season 2024-25, of which 53.93 LMTs were procured from farmers. The Minister confirmed that Rs 12,511.76 crore had been paid to farmers, and there were no pending dues under the MSP operations. (NSS)

UNITED FORUM OF BANK UNIONS

(AIBEA-AIBOC-NCBE-AIBOA-BEFI-INBEF-INBOC-NORW-NOBO)

United Forum of Bank Unions is the joint co-ordination body the following 9 bank unions representing more than 8 lacs of employees and officers in Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks, Foreign Banks, Co-op. Banks and Regional Rural Banks.

1. All India Bank Employees Association
2. All India Bank Officers Confederation
3. National Confederation of Bank Employees
4. All India Bank officers Association
5. Bank Employees Federation of India
6. Indian National Bank Employees Federation
7. Indian National Bank officers Congress
8. National organisation of Bank Workers
9. National organisation of Bank Officers

United Forum of Bank Unions has given the call for agitational programmes

culminating in 2 Days (48 hours) continuous strike from the midnight of 23rd

March to midnight of 25th March, 2025 on the following demands and issues:

- ? Adequate recruitment in all cadres, regularise all temporary employees
- ? Implementation of 5 Day work per week in Banking Industry
- ? Immediate withdrawal of the recent DFS/Govt. directives on performance review and PLI, which threaten job security, create division and discrimination amongst employees and officers, violate the 8th Joint Note, and undermine PSB's autonomy
- ? Safety of Bank Officers/ Staff against the assault/abuses by unruly banking public.
- ? Fill up the post of Workmen/ Officer Directors in PSBs.
- ? Resolution of residual issues pending with IBA

Amend Gratuity Act to increase the ceiling to Rs 25 lacs on the lines of Scheme for government employees along with exemption from income tax

? Do not recover income tax on staff welfare benefits given to employees and officers on concessional terms. Managements to bear the same.

? Maintain a minimum of 51% of Equity Capital in IDBI Bank by Government

? Stop Micromanagement of PSBs by DFS on policy matters affecting service conditions of employees and officers and undermining bilateralism.

? Stop Outsourcing permanent jobs in Banks

? Stop Unfair Labour Practices in Banking Industry.

Need for adequate recruitment in Banks: Banks are public utility organisations serving

large number of people of our country on a daily basis. Hence Banks to be provided with

adequate staff to serve the customers and general banking public. But in the last one

decade and more, we find that the Banks are not recruiting adequate staff in the Banks.

Hence there is acute shortage of staff in the Branches and hence employees are unable to

extend satisfactory customer services. Public sector banks are implementing all the

schemes of the Government and PSBs are not provided with sufficient staff to serve the

customers.

The following facts will explain how public sector banks are deprived of adequate staff.

2013 2024 Reduction
Clerks 3,98,801 2,46,965 1,51,835
Substaff 1,53,628 94,348 59,280

TTD to provide Srivari darshan on letters of Telangana public representatives

Tirumala, March 17 (NSS): TTD will provide Srivari Darshan to the recommendation letters of the public representatives of Telangana State as per the instructions of Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Nara Chandrababu Naidu with effect from March 24.

As part of this, the recommendation letters of public representatives from Telangana State regarding VIP Break Darshan will be received only on Sundays (for darshan on Mondays), Mondays (for darshan on Tuesdays). Similarly, the recommendation letters regarding Rs 300 darshan tickets will be received only on Wednesdays and Thursdays (for darshan on the same day). Only one recommendation letter per person (not exceeding six members) for darshan will be accepted.

So far, the letters of recommendation received from the public representatives of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday for VIP break Darshan on Monday will hence-

forth be accepted on Saturdays for Darshan on Sundays. TTD has decided to this extent, after considering all the points which were discussed at length keeping in mind the accommodation facilities available in Tirumala, the darshan timings and slots of other devotees. (NSS)

Jupally visits Niluvuralla for securing place in UNESCO's list

Mudumal, March 16 (NSS): In a landmark moment for Makthal, Telangana Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao visited the Mudumal Menhirs (Niluvuralla) after the site secured its place on UNESCO's tentative list. The visit marked a significant milestone in the efforts led by Jai Makthal Trust and its president Sundeep Kumar Makthala to bring global recognition to this ancient heritage site.

Sensodyne Sets a GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™? to kickstart 2025 World Oral Health Day campaign

27,396 Dental Screenings completed in 1 Day at Maha Kumbh



the numbers—it's about the impact we want to create by reaching thousands of individuals, raising awareness, and encouraging better oral health every day. We are taking this initiative forward by driving education throughout World Oral Health Month and offering free digital dental check-ups. Through these ongoing efforts, Sensodyne continues to elevate the oral health landscape in India, making oral care education, awareness, and treatment more accessible for all."

Dr. Ashok Dhoble, Hon. Secretary General Head, Indian Dental Association, shared, "We are proud to partner with Sensodyne in this initiative to raise oral health awareness in India. As the Indian Dental Association, we have always been at the forefront of promoting preventive dental care, and this initiative is an example which showcases the power of education and accessibility in transforming oral health. This effort not only empowers individuals to take the first step towards better oral health but also highlight the importance of early detection and intervention." The screenings at Maha Kumbh were facilitated by a dedicated team of nearly 200+promoters, leveraging mobile technology in collaboration with A Dental Friend and Smilo. Over 30 IDA-member dentists were present to oversee the process and address queries, ensuring a seamless and credible experience. With World Oral Health Day approaching on March 20, Sensodyne's initiative sets the stage for a larger movement, integrating education, technology, and accessibility. Building on the success of the record-breaking event, Sensodyne is now extending free digital dental check-ups to the public, ensuring that more people can conveniently assess their oral health. Simply scan the QR code here to check your oral health.

Hyderabad: Sensodyne, a leading oral care brand from Haleon (formerly GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare), sets a GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™ for successfully attempting the 'Most online dental screening tests completed in 24 hours. The record-breaking initiative, held at Maha Kumbh 2025, saw more than 27,000 individuals taking the dental check-up, marking a significant step in educating Indians about the importance of proactive oral care. To further its commitment, Sensodyne also distributed its newly launched ?20 small toothpaste pack, designed to make sensitivity protection more affordable and accessible.

This record also marks the beginning of Sensodyne's World Oral Health Day campaign, aimed at encouraging individuals to Take the First Step towards better oral health. For over a decade, Sensodyne has empowered consumers to recognize and address tooth sensitivity early and has conducted "chill tests" across India. This initiative, has helped millions identify their condition, seek timely intervention, and enjoy their favourite foods again—ultimately enhancing their quality of life. Kishlay Seth, Category Lead—Oral Health, Haleon India Subcontinent, shared, "At Sensodyne, our mission is to encourage people to take the first step towards their oral health. Setting a GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™ at Maha Kumbh 2025 is not just about

Continental Hospitals Becomes the First Hospital in India to Launch Comprehensive AI Program for Cancer Diagnosis



Hyderabad: In a landmark event, Continental Hospitals has officially embarked on a transformative journey by launching its cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) program aimed at revolutionizing cancer detection and treatment. The ceremony took place at the Continental Hospitals, Gachibowli, Hyderabad on 17th March, 2025, and was graced by esteemed guests including Dr. Madan Pillutla, Dean of the Indian School of Business, and Dr. Phanindra K. Yalavarthi, Professor at the Department of Computational and Data Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru (He participated through Zoom Call). Dr. Guru N. Reddy, Founder and Chairman of Continental Hospitals, proudly announced that for the first time in India, the hospital is set to utilize artificial intelligence in collaboration with globally renowned institutions like MIT, the Mayo Clinic, and various Netherlands-based organizations. This innovative program aims to enhance the early detection of breast, lung,

and pancreatic cancers.

"We have established the 'Continental Center for Early Detection and Treatment for Cancer' as a pioneering initiative in India. With the integration of AI, we can identify cancer risks up to five years in advance of conventional methods," said Dr. Reddy. He emphasized, "This is not just a technological advancement; it is a game changer for medicine, potentially saving thousands of lives and millions in treatment costs." The event underscored the potential of AI to significantly reduce cancer mortality rates while making treatments more affordable. Dr. Madan Pillutla shared insights on how rapidly evolving AI technologies can transform various sectors, including healthcare. "Artificial intelligence is bound to have a formidable impact on the medical field, and it is commendable to see institutions like Continental Hospitals championing this change," he remarked.

Tight Security Arrangements for IPL 2025 Cricket Matches

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu



Hyderabad: Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu conducted a coordination meeting at the Rachakonda office in Neremet regarding security arrangements for the 18th edition of Tata IPL 2025, which will be held at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Uppal. The meeting included DCPs, ACPs, representatives from the Hyderabad Cricket Association, Uppal Stadium authorities, and Sunrisers Hyderabad team officials.

During the meeting, Commissioner Sudheer Babu instructed officials to take all necessary security precautions for the matches held under the Rachakonda Commissionerate. He strictly directed that laptops, electronic devices, matchboxes, sharp objects, outside food items, and water bottles should not be allowed inside the

stadium to prevent security breaches or any untoward incidents. As a large number of cricket fans are expected to attend, the commissioner emphasized the need for robust security arrangements. He also ordered officials to set up spacious parking facilities for cars and two-wheelers. Additionally, he instructed traffic officials to ensure smooth movement of general commuters and prevent traffic congestion on the main Uppal road during match days.

The meeting was attended by DCP Malkajgiri Padmaja, DCP Crime Aravind Babu, DCP Admin Indira, DCP Special Branch G. Narasimha Reddy, Traffic DCP Malla Reddy, DCP SOT Ramana Reddy, DCP Headquarters Shyam Sunder, additional DCPs, ACPs, IPL representatives, and other officials.

Our party welcomes BC Bill: Harish Rao



minister Harish Rao announced in the assembly that the BC bill introduced by the State government was being welcomed wholeheartedly by the BRS party.

Speaking on the occasion, Harish Rao said BC communities will be very happy when they will get 42% reservation in education sector and jobs and 42% reservation in local bodies, urban and rural areas, we sincerely want them to get those benefits. "I am saying that the BRS party will come together to fight in Parliament along with introducing the bill in the State assembly," Harish Rao said. Stating that the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is currently the main Opposition leader in the Lok Sabha, he said Rahul Gandhi should work hard for this bill. He said when KCR was the CM, 50% reservation was provided to the BCs in the election of the chairman and directors of the market committee and added that for the first time in the country, reservation was also brought in for the Gowda caste in liquor shops. (NSS)

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): The BRS Party has expressed its full support for the decision of the Congress government to provide 42 percent reservations to the BCs of the State in education and employment sectors. Former

Apollo Hospitals Launches Revolutionary Apollo Joint Preservation Program in India



AIMIM MLAs stage walk-out from assembly

Hyderabad, March 17 (NSS): AIMIM members walked out of the Telangana Legislative Assembly today. The party members came out protesting the way the assembly was being run. On the occasion, Majlis MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi expressed his anger over the State government's behaviour. The government has failed to run the Legislative Assembly. Will they murder democracy in the Assembly? This is not Gandhi Bhavan, but Telangana Legislative Assembly," Akbaruddin commented. Akbaruddin Owaisi flagged the Congress government in a strong manner. Owaisi expressed his anger over the conduct of the assembly. Owaisi criticized the ruling party for allocating more time to the Opposition party without giving them a chance to speak. In the assembly, MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi said if they want to speak in the assembly, they were not given the mic. "It is not good for the ruling party to do this. This government has completely failed in running the assembly. They are not answering the questions asked by the members. They are also changing the questions. They are kill-



ing democracy. We are walking out of this assembly to protest the behaviour of the Congress government. This is not Gandhi Bhavan.. We should remember that this is an assembly. Run the assembly like an assembly.. not like Gandhi Bhavan," suggested MLA Owaisi. (NSS)

Take resolute action against pro-Khalistani factions: Rajnath Singh tells US

GNS News Agency, March 17

New Delhi: India voiced apprehensions regarding anti-national elements operating abroad, notably pro-Khalistani factions, particularly their subversive manoeuvres of the Khalistani faction Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), active within the US. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, according to sources, urged the US government to adopt resolute measures against this organisation.

On Monday, Rajnath Singh convened with Tulsi Gabbard, the US Director of National Intelligence, in a dialogue that underscored deepening the strategic alliance between India and the United States, particularly in the realms of defence and intelligence collaboration. On his X handle, the Defence Minister said: "Happy to have met the US Director of National Intelligence Ms@TulsiGabbard in New Delhi. We discussed a wide range of issues which include defence and information sharing, aiming to further deepen the India-US partnership." The meeting between these two prominent figures highlighted the critical role of strategic security as a cornerstone of the expansive global partnership between India and the US, an official statement said. "Rajnath Singh and Gabbard assessed the re-



Delhi: India voiced apprehensions regarding anti-national elements operating abroad, notably pro-Khalistani factions, particularly their subversive manoeuvres of the Khalistani faction Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), active within the US.

markable progress achieved in joint military drills, strategic alignment, the fusion of defence industrial networks, and the exchange of maritime intelligence," the statement said. The leaders also ventured into prospects for pioneering cooperation in advanced defence technologies, underscoring their mutual dedication to furthering shared strategic objectives. Moreover, they discussed important topics such as enhancing operational compatibility and deepening the integration of defence supply chains to fortify resilience and innovation. Gabbard's trip to

India represents the inaugural high-profile engagement by an official from the Donald Trump administration. Her discussions with Rajnath Singh came on the heels of a Sunday meeting with India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, where they probed avenues to bolster intelligence-sharing and security collaboration. Besides, Gabbard participated in a discreet gathering of international intelligence leaders hosted by India, attended by counterparts from the US, Canada, and the UK. The agenda encompassed intelligence coordination, counterterrorism strategies, threats posed by emerging technologies, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The conclave also addressed pressing global issues, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and tensions in the Middle East. Gabbard's itinerary extends to Japan, Thailand, and France. Meanwhile, on March 9, a Hindu temple in California was defaced with "anti-India" slogans by pro-Khalistani agitators, eliciting a sharp rebuke from India. Labelling such acts "reprehensible", Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal urged local authorities to safeguard religious sites adequately.

Delhi-born Punjabi woman appointed Canada's new health minister



GNS News Agency, March 17

New Delhi-born Kamal Khera has been appointed Canada's health minister, making her the only Indian-born member of Prime Minister Mark Carney's newly sworn-in cabinet. A registered nurse and long-time Liberal politician, Khera represents Brampton West and has served in various key roles since her first election in 2015. Khera takes over the health portfolio after previously serving as minister of diversity, inclusion and persons with disabilities. She has also held the positions of minister of seniors and parliamentary secretary in multiple ministries, including health, national revenue, and international development. Her appointment comes as Carney forms his first cabinet following Justin Trudeau's resignation, with the new government comprising 24 ministers—13 men and 11 women—as compared to 37 in the previous Trudeau ministry. Khera was born on February 4, 1989, in New Delhi. Her father Harminder Singh, who passed away in 2020, served in the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), while her mother, Gursharan Kaur, was a teacher. Her elder brother Mani Singh is a mortgage specialist at Bank of Montreal.

Her family moved to Canada when she was 10 years old. There she went on to pursue a career in healthcare. She completed an Honours Bachelor of Science in Nursing from York University before working as a registered nurse in the palliative and oncology units at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto. Her background in healthcare shaped her political journey, with a focus on social welfare and public health policies. During the first wave of the COVID-19

pandemic, Khera returned to her medical roots, volunteering at a hard-hit long-term care facility in Brampton and later administering vaccines in the community. "As a nurse, my top priority is to always be there to support my patients, and that's the same mentality I'll bring every day to the role of minister of health," she said. "Extremely grateful for the confidence of PM @MarkJCarney. Now, it's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

Khera has remained closely connected to her roots. She visited Ludhiana in 2015 for her brother's wedding, shortly after being elected as the Member of Parliament for Brampton West at the age of 26. During her visit, she openly spoke about the differences between politics in India and Canada, noting the heavy security surrounding Indian politicians. "We move around like ordinary citizens," she said. Recounting her journey into politics, Khera recalled that while working as a nurse in the oncology department at St. Joseph's Health Centre, she became increasingly aware of the growing gap between the rich and poor.

Her ancestral village of Bhagomajra near Mohali celebrated her re-election to Parliament in 2021. Villagers recalled her visit the previous December, when she connected with her community. Her grandfather, Mansa Singh, had donated land for a local gurdwara in the village. Khera was first elected to the House of Commons at the age of 26, making her one of the youngest MPs in Canada's history. As a member of the Liberal Party, she has consistently represented Brampton West, a riding with a significant South Asian population. Over the years, she has also been actively involved in community work, serving as chairperson of the South Asian Canadians Heritage Foundation, mentoring with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel, and coordinating events for the SickKids Foundation. Speaking about Carney's leadership, Khera said, "In these uncertain times, Mark's leadership in bringing Canadians together and his economic expertise will help us deliver a true Team Canada response to President Trump." With her appointment, Khera joins fellow Indian-origin minister Anita Anand in the new cabinet. Anand, born in Nova Scotia to a Tamil father and a Punjabi mother, has been named minister of innovation, science, and industry after previously holding the transport and internal trade portfolio.

'BJP playing tricks': Bhagwant Mann joins chorus against delimitation

GNS News Agency, March 17

Joining the chorus against the delimitation proposed by the Centre, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of playing "dirty games" and deliberately attempting to reduce the number of Lok Sabha seats in those states where the saffron party cannot win and increasing seats where it is sure of victory.

This is the first time that Mann has spoken against the impending delimitation of constituencies. Responding to a query by the media after sending off a group of teachers to Finland, Mann said, "I have spoken to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin over the phone. He is sending two of his ministers to Punjab. The BJP-led Centre is playing tricks, reducing the seats of states where they cannot win and increasing in the states where they are winning." He said it was ironic that while the Centre has a policy of controlling population and keeping the size of families smaller across the country, on the other hand, the number of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies is being increased in those states where this policy is not being followed. "If the number of seats is increased or decreased on the basis of population policy, then it will affect Punjab. Of course, one or two seats will increase in Punjab, but it will not be in the same proportion as it will increase in other states," Mann said. Stalin had recently written a letter to the chief ministers of non-BJP ruled states and called upon them to formulate a strategy on opposing delimitation. He had also spoken to Mann.

Earlier, Punjab Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s chief spokesperson and MP from Anandpur Sahib, Malvinder Singh Kang, had stated that they have similar apprehensions like southern states that the criterion of delimitation will weaken Punjab as "it would affect the representation of Punjab state in the Parliament besides being a threat to India's federal structure." Kang told The Indian Express that



as MPs, he and his party colleagues will raise the issue in the next session of Lok Sabha. "Before that, the state government will also write to the Centre rejecting the criterion of basing the delimitation on population. This is injustice being meted to us. The Government of India has appealed to the states from time-to-time to keep a check on the burgeoning population. Punjab is among those states that checked the population considerably just like the Southern states. We should not be made to pay for following the flagship schemes of the Centre," Kang said. He said that if delimitation is based on the count of the people in a state, then Punjab will stand to lose compared to other states that do not check the population. "We cannot allow this. The criterion should be changed. The criterion should be acceptable to all the states. The Centre should work out a formula that should be acceptable to all. But we will not allow it on the basis of population. We are opposing it and we have rejected it," he said. AAP senior spokesperson Neel Garg also said that party MPs will raise the issue in Parliament. "Why should Punjab pay for responding to a population control call of the Centre? Punjab is on the right path, but if the Centre goes ahead and delimits on count of population, it is unacceptable. Our party MPs will raise this issue in Parliament."

BJP names 25 organisational district presidents in West Bengal; 17 new faces part of list

GNS News Agency, March 17

The West Bengal unit of the BJP on Friday released a list of 25 organisational district presidents, bringing in 17 new faces ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. The BJP has 43 organisational districts in West Bengal, which cover the 42 Lok Sabha constituencies and 294 Assembly constituencies in the state. Party insiders said that the names of the remaining 18 organisational district presidents will be announced soon. As per the list issued by the party's state general secretary and legislator, Dipak Barman, who was the returning officer for the internal organisational polls, of the 25 organisational districts where new presidents have been announced, 19 are from South Bengal and six from North Bengal. Party sources said that the BJP follows a 'one person, one post' policy and therefore, district presidents who have become MLAs will have to give up their posts. In Cooch Behar, for example, as Sukumar Roy has become an MLA, Abhijit Burman has been named the new district



president.

Similarly, in Arambagh, MLA Biman Ghosh has been replaced as district president by Sushanta Bera. In Tamluk, Tapasi Mondol, who recently left the party, has been replaced by Malay Singha, and in Kanthi, Arup Kumar Das has been replaced by Somnath Roy. In Jalpaiguri, where local-level internal conflicts are brewing, Shyamal Roy has been named the district president in place of Bapi Goswami. In Maldaha Uttar, Ujjal Dutta has been replaced by Pratap Singh. Certain district presidents have allegedly been changed due to their poor

performance in the Lok Sabha elections, sources said. In Maldaha Dakshin, Partho Ghosh has been replaced by Ajay Ganguli. Similarly, in Jangipur, Subal Chandra Ghosh has been named BJP district president in place of Dhananjay Ghosh; in Barasat, Tarun Kanti Ghosh has been replaced by Rajib Poddar; in Basirhat, Tapas Ghosh has been replaced by Sukalyan Baidya; and in Kolkata North Suburban, advocate Arijit Bakshi has made way for Chandni Charan Roy. A poor show in the Lok Sabha elections has allegedly led to Ramprasad Bhattacharya

(Howrah Town) and Mohan Adak (Serampore) being replaced by Gouranga Bhattacharya and Suman Ghosh, respectively, sources said. Party insiders said Hooghly district president Tushar Majumdar has been replaced by Gautam Chatterjee due to a winning Lok Sabha seat being lost due to an alleged conflict between former MP Locket Chatterjee and Majumdar. In Bankura, Sunil Rudra Mondol has been replaced by Prosenjit Chatterjee. In Purulia, Vivek Ranga has been removed from his post, allegedly due to a lot of infighting in the unit.

Another ASI killed in Bihar, this time while trying to mediate dispute between families in Munger



GNS News Agency, March 17

Four people were arrested in connection with the incident, and on Saturday morning, one of them was shot at and injured while trying to escape custody, police said. "ASI Santosh Singh, who was stationed... at the Mufassil police station, received a call regarding disturbance in the Nandalpur area by the family of one Ranbir Yadav and went to the spot where he was allegedly attacked by Yadav,"

Munger SP Syed Imran Masood said. Yadav, who is believed to have been intoxicated, allegedly attacked the ASI with a sharp object, inflicting a severe injury to the head, the SP said. ASI Singh was rushed to a local hospital and later referred to Paras Hospital in Patna for advanced treatment. He succumbed to his injuries early Saturday morning. Following the incident, four individuals, including Ranbir Yadav and a woman, were arrested, police said.

One of those arrested, identified as Guddu Yadav, was shot at while trying to escape custody, police said. They claimed that a police vehicle in which he was being transported was involved in an accident after swerving to avoid livestock on the road. In the ensuing chaos, Guddu Yadav allegedly seized a rifle from a policeman and aimed it at Station House Officer (SHO) Chandan Kumar. When Guddu refused to lower the weapon despite warnings, the SHO fired in self-defence, injuring Guddu in the leg, police said. "He has been hospitalised, along with other officers who sustained injuries in the accident," the SP said. Police said the body of ASI Santosh Singh is being transported back to Munger for last rites. Further investigations are underway.

Amid recent grenade attacks in Punjab, blast at Amritsar marks 'shift' to targeting a religious site

GNS News Agency, March 17

The grenade-throwing incident in Amritsar on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday marks the first such attack on a religious site in Punjab in the current wave of incidents which had so far focused primarily on police targets. Senior Punjab Police officials in Chandigarh said the CCTV footage shows two motorcycle-borne attackers approach the Thakurdwara Mandir in the Khandwala area of Amritsar around midnight. The person who threw the grenade appeared to be unable to take out its pin in multiple attempts before succeeding, they added.

"The fact that a temple has been chosen this time as a target shows that there is a change in strategy of the ISI handlers sitting in Pakistan. Till now, the targets were police posts, politically connected people and a relative of a police official. It seems there is a deliberate effort to incite communal passions in the state," a senior officer said. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has described the incident as one of many attempts to disturb the peace in the state. "Drugs, gangsters, extortion are part of it and there are attempts to show that Punjab has become a disturbed state... During the festival of Holi in other states the police had to use lathi-charge during processions. But such things do not happen in Punjab... The law and order situation in Punjab is good," he told media persons on the sidelines of an event in Chandigarh.

Incidents involving the throwing of grenades have emerged as a significant security concern in Punjab in recent times, particularly in the past few months. These attacks, often linked to organised crime, terrorist groups, and cross-border networks, have targeted both civilian and police establishments. Over the past four months, the state has witnessed at least 12 grenade attacks, with a series of incidents beginning in November 2024. Earlier targets included police stations and posts, such as the Gumtala police post in Amritsar (January 9, 2025), the Ghania Ke Bangar police station in Batala (December 12, 2024), and the Wadala Bangar police post in Gurdaspur (December 20, 2024).

Other notable attacks include the grenade lobbed at a liquor trader's residence in Jaintipur, Amritsar (January 15, 2025), and a Congress leader's house in Batala (January 16, 2025). These incidents indicate a pattern of targeting



both state infrastructure and individuals, possibly for extortion or intimidation. Investigations have frequently pointed to the involvement of Pakistan-based terrorist groups like Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF), often in collaboration with gangsters such as Harpreet Singh (alias Happy Passia), operating from the US, and Harwinder Singh Sandhu (alias Rinda) in Pakistan. Authorities have recovered smuggled explosives, including Austrian-made Arges grenades and Chinese variants, delivered via drones from across the border. The Punjab Police have made several arrests, including key operatives like Lajar Masih, linked to multiple attacks, and busted modules responsible for earlier blasts. Despite these efforts, the recurrence of such incidents suggests persistent challenges in curbing the threat.

The surge in grenade attacks has sparked widespread criticism of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led Punjab government under Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, with opposition leaders and locals accusing it of failing to maintain security. The state's proximity to the Pakistan border, coupled with alleged ISI backing of these operations, has intensified concerns. While Punjab Police claim to have resolved many cases, the latest temple attack underscores the ongoing vulnerability and the need for stronger counter-terrorism measures. Punjab Congress chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said that with yet another grenade attack in Amritsar, this time targeting a temple, there is an atmosphere of fear prevailing in the state, and people are genuinely feeling insecure. "It's high time the AAP Punjab government wakes up from its deep slumber and takes action," he said in a post on X.

27 Dubai visits this year, possession of UAE resident card among reasons cited by special court to deny bail to Ranya Rao



GNS News Agency, March 17

Frequent travel to Dubai, including 27 visits since January 2025, possession of a UAE Resident Identity Card, and threat to national security have been cited as reasons by a special court in Bengaluru on Friday for denial of bail to actress Ranya Rao, 33, in a gold smuggling case. The actress was arrested at Bengaluru International Airport on March 3 when she arrived from Dubai with 14.2 kg of gold, worth Rs 12.56 crore, strapped onto her body. The action followed specific inputs gathered by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)... the accused No. 1 possessing Resident Identity Card of UAE and having history of travel to Dubai on 27 occasions since January 2025, is another factor which does not incline the court to extend discretionary relief of granting bail...," the special court ruled Friday in her bail plea.

The court also rejected the claim made by the actress's counsel that she should be given bail on account of her gender. "...the facts and circumstances leading to the case on hand are detrimental to the national security and the revenue of the country, this court is not inclined to exercise the discretion of granting bail... at this juncture," the special court ruled. The court also rejected arguments made by the counsels for the actress - senior advocate Kiran Javali assisted by customs cases defence counsel B S Girish - that the DRI did not comply with section 102 of the Customs Act and did not obtain the written consent of the actress before conducting a physical search to find the gold concealed on her body. The argument cannot be accepted because "there is written consent of accused No. 1 on record to show the compliance of the said section. The said consent at this juncture is sufficient to gather triable case against the accused No. 1," the special court ruled.

"...the gravity of the offence being that of economic

offence which very much affects the financial health of the country and poses the threat to the genuine traders dealing with gold. Furthermore, accused No. 1 having not extended her full co-operation during the course of investigation is also a factor...," the court said while denying her bail.

The actress was intercepted by DRI officials when she did not declare the gold consignment on her person to customs authorities but, instead, walked through a green channel at the airport with the escort of a Bengaluru police protocol official. Ranya Rao is incidentally the stepdaughter of Karnataka DGP-rank officer K Ramachandra Rao IPS. The DRI has claimed that the woman misused the police protocol service available for the DGP at the airport for gold smuggling purposes.

Kavitha raises concern over remarks against BRS members in Telangana Legislative Council

GNS News Agency, March 17

Hyderabad: BRS leader and MLC Kavitha on Saturday raised concerns over the conduct of Congress and BJP MLAs. She alleged that these members repeatedly spread falsehoods during Council proceedings.

When BRS MLAs attempted to counter these claims, the Council chairman dismissed their efforts, asking them not to create "nuisance." She demanded that the chairman's comments be expunged from the official records, citing previous instances where similar remarks were made against BRS members.

She said the treatment of BRS members in both the Legislative Assembly and Council was concerning. She also said that they were not given due respect or representation.

Highlighting recent incidents, she pointed out the suspension of BRS members in the Assembly and remarks made against BRS members in the Council reflected a vindictive approach by the government towards the BRS.

This Chinese F&B chain overtakes Starbucks, McDonald's



GNS News Agency, March 17

Hong Kong: Chinese food and beverage brands are gaining ground across Southeast Asia, offering alternatives to big name American chains and expanding Beijing's commercial and cultural influence in neighbouring economies. The Chinese beverage giant Mixue Group has become the world's largest F&B chain by number of outlets, overtaking Starbucks and McDonald's. The company, whose brand name Mixue Bingcheng means "Honey Snow Ice City", in Chinese, is capitalising on the region-wide sweet tooth with affordable offerings of ice cream, coffee and bubble tea drinks.

"Even on social media like TikTok and others, there is a joke that any empty shophouse would soon turn into a Mixue store," Rahma Yuliana said, referring to a popular saying in Indonesia, where Mixue has more than 2,600 outlets. The single mother, who runs an online business, takes her daughter for afterschool treats that won't drain her wallet, such as a cup of brown sugar milk tea that costs USD 1.10, about one-third cheaper than similar offerings by rival Taiwanese tea chain Chatime. An ice cream sells for as little as 50 cents, undercutting McDonald's.

As of September, the Mixue Group had over 45,000 stores carrying its Mixue tea drinks, ice creams and Lucky Cup coffee products, more than the store numbers of Starbucks and McDonald's, industry analysts reported. About 40,000 of those are in China. More broadly, by December, Chinese F&B brands had opened over 6,100 outlets in Southeast Asia, Singapore-headquartered research firm Momentum Works reported. India and Vietnam account for roughly two-thirds, while there are relatively more Chinese brands in Singapore and Malaysia, which have sizable Chinese-speaking populations. Nearly all of Mixue's stores are franchises that the company supplies with ingredients for drinks like Creamy Mango Boba, Mango Oats Jasmine Tea and Coconut Jelly Milk Tea. Apart from Mixue, other market stars include hotpot giant Haidilao, Fish With

You sauerkraut fish restaurants, and well-known beverage brands such as Luckin Coffee, Heytea and Chagee. Mixue's shares have doubled from their IPO price since their March 3 trading debut in Hong Kong.

Momentum Works CEO Jianggan Li said Chinese businesses are actively seeking new growth in Southeast Asia after facing fierce competition in their home market. The push by food and drink retailers has raised awareness that China has more to offer than just cheap electronics. The companies are well-equipped, using automation to enhance their efficiency, and adept at online marketing, Li said.

Big Western brands sometimes take a long time to find local partners and develop long-term plans. The Chinese F&B companies are "much more impatient," he said. In Thailand's capital Bangkok, Chinese entrepreneur Siya Han has invested over USD 1.37 million in 12 Mixue stores and about 10 other outlets selling spicy broth bowls, sauerkraut fish and fried chicken steaks in about six years. Outlets in shopping malls take time to recover costs due to huge rent deposits, she said, but her other outlets typically break even within six months to a year, excluding their lease guarantees. "If you open Chinese restaurants slowly, you can't survive," she said. In the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, Chinese sauerkraut fish chain Fish With You vice president Liu Lijuan also spotted opportunity in Southeast Asia's large ethnic Chinese population and growing economies. The brand's USD 2.35,000 investment in one of its Malaysian outlets paid off in just nine months, with lines out the door almost daily, said Liu, who oversees the company's overseas expansion across the region.

A customer, Victoria Kovalan said the new Chinese brands made it easier for her to try new cuisines. "It's opened up our palates," she said, referring to the popularity of Sichuan hotpots, known for their spicy flavours. Vietnamese student Nguyen Thu Hoai in Hanoi initially was sceptical about Mixue as a Chinese brand but has become a regular customer, she said, won over by its affordability and better-than-expected quality. The expansion of Chinese food and beverage brands is part of a broader trend where Chinese goods are no longer seen as merely cheap but as having real value, said Gordon Mathews, a professor of anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Recalling the cultural influence from McDonald's global expansion, Mathews said he visited its first outlet in southern China's economic hub of Guangzhou in the 1990s, where a clerk told him, "I want to go to America." If Chinese food brands exploded worldwide, they might have that influence, though the impact remains to be seen, he said. "China does have an uphill struggle to obtain soft power, but it's doing an excellent job with its products," he said.

Inside Shabbir's Tawakkal Sweets, a Bohri Mohalla legacy drawing people from across Mumbai during Ramadan



GNS News Agency, March 17

Every year during Ramadan, Mohammad Ali Road in Mumbai becomes a pilgrimage site of sorts for food lovers from all walks of life, transcending religious and cultural boundaries. But just a stone's throw away, another neighbourhood — Bohri Mohalla in Bhandi Bazaar — continues to cement its place on the city's culinary map. Its lanes transform post-sunset into a vibrant, pulsating hub of food and festivity. By 9 pm, even on a mid-week Wednesday, it is jam-packed with eager diners, making walking the easiest way to navigate. Among the unmissable spots here is Tawakkal Sweets. A legacy business started in 1950 by Abdulla Mithaiwala, Tawakkal — which means 'will of god' — began as a single shop offering only a few delicacies like malpua and jalebi, all made by Abdulla himself. In the 1980s, when Shabbir Mithaiwala took over, he expanded the business, introducing a plethora of sweets, including fruit-based delights like Mango Malai and Pineapple Malai. He sourced the finest ingredients — from milk from UP to woodfire-made mawa from Uttarakhand and dry fruits like mamra giris, a premium variety of almonds. It soon became a name to reckon with when it comes to sweets.

The brand, however, underwent a division in 2015, and locals now differentiate between the two by their sign board colours — 'red' and 'yellow.' The yellow one, known as Shabbir's Tawakkal Sweets, is run by the late Shabbir Mithaiwala's wife, Samina Shabbir, and their sons, Moayyad and Taher Shabbir. For most of the year, Shabbir's Tawakkal Sweets remains a mithai shop, known for its Malai Khaja and other delectable treats. But come Ramadan, it metamorphoses into a bustling eatery, expanding across multiple shopfronts and spilling out onto the road with large community tables encircling the eatery, all operating till 4 am. The menu is divided into three broad categories — grilled dishes cooked over charcoal, Bombay street food featuring bheja fry, gurd, and roti, and all cooked on tawa, and Bohri cuisine, which is their true forte. Slow-cooked delicacies like nihari, baida, keema, and biryani dominate this section.

"While my brother and the cooks do all the hard work, the final approval comes from me," shared Taher, an actor-producer with credits in films like Naam Shabana and Guilty, and co-founder of production house RAT Films. However, his involvement in the food business is far from passive. The story behind their much-loved nihari exemplifies this attention to detail. "Everyone in the industry knows that the best nihari is served at Dia Mirza's house. That was my benchmark. It took my team three years to perfect the recipe, and only when Dia herself tried it and said, 'maza aa gaya,' did we add it to the menu." The nihari, he shared, is slow-cooked over charcoal for seven hours. But it is not just about the dishes — it is about the details. Their khamiri roti contains 40 per cent wheat, highlighting their focus on healthier options. Unlike many, they use coconut oil instead of palm oil for tawa items. The family's journey has not been without its struggles. In 2015, following the division, his father left the original Tawakkal Sweets and started afresh in a small rented shop within the same neighbourhood. After his passing in 2017, the brothers and their mother took over, gradu-

ally expanding both their footprint and menu, with Bohri cuisine being the next logical step.

"It was a big hit but because I was doing well, it did not affect us that badly when it comes to finances," said Taher, barely audible over the night rush at the shop, adding, "I have always had a big risk appetite." He recalled being as young as six when his father first asked if he would join the business. "I said yes, but years later, when he asked again, I told him, 'Right now, I am a dabba in your train. Let me become an engine first, then I will join the train.' In the seven years since, the business has expanded twentyfold," he shared.

Taher also brought his expertise to marketing and brand visibility. "Did you see our hoarding? It's a 25-foot LED screen. We were the first to do it, and it cost us about Rs 20 lakh. My friends in the film industry use it to promote their movies — like the cast of Malegaon Express," he said. All the decisions, said the brothers, worked in their favour. The eatery has expanded from a modest 20-seater to a sprawling 220-seater. "We have been serving food throughout the year for a while now, but from this year onwards, it will be available from a dedicated restaurant post-Ramadan," Taher added. Pointing to a wall adorned with photos of him alongside his celebrity friends and snapshots documenting the brand's journey, Taher shared how Bohri Mohalla has transformed in recent years. Post-COVID, he encouraged local vendors to set up tables outside their restaurants, gradually turning the area into a street food hotspot. "The kind of crowd you see on a Wednesday night now — that is what Saturdays used to look like a few years ago. This year, it has grown tenfold," he said. Beyond food, Shabbir's Tawakkal Sweets is also making strides in inclusivity. Unlike most eateries in the area, they employ women. "My mother has always believed in equal opportunities. Since 2017, we have had women working during Ramadan," he said. Initially, there was some resistance, but Taher remained pragmatic: "When you do well, the critics quieten on their own." The secret to their success? "Ingredients," he said. "People can copy recipes, but unless they invest in quality ingredients, they will not get it right. We have hand-picked our vendors over the years." Looking ahead, they are considering expanding to Bandra or Jogeshwari. "But we need the right partners — someone who will handle the logistics while we bring the food and the experience," he said.

Mancherial becomes hub of spurious cotton seed smuggling

Mancherial: Smuggling of banned spurious cotton seeds is going on unabated even as police try to curb the menace through different measures including invoking the Preventive Detention Act against habitual offenders in the district. Mancherial district appears to be the epicentre of the menace with a higher number of cases than those booked in Asifabad, Adilabad and Nirmal districts. The district saw 12 cases when compared to six cases reported in Adilabad district. Both Kumram Bheem Asifabad and Nirmal districts witnessed nominal cases of smuggling. Even as data shows that smuggling of spurious cotton seeds was less till 2023 due to stringent action taken against the offenders, the menace has gone up in Mancherial district in 2024. For instance, the district saw 12 cases from January to December of 2024 as against 4 in 2023 and 5 cases in 2022, reflecting a rise by 200 percent. Two cases were registered this year so far. Some traders of the district are importing the seeds from seed manufacturers in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. They then pack the seeds in sachets of 1 kg or 500 grams each.

Hamas says it will only release American-Israeli hostage if truce agreement implemented



GNS News Agency, March 17

Cairo: Hamas said on Saturday it would only release an American-Israeli and the bodies of four other hostages if Israel implements the existing ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, calling it an "exceptional deal" aimed at getting the truce back on track. A senior Hamas official said long-delayed talks over the ceasefire's second phase would need to begin the day of the release and last no longer than 50 days. Israel would also need to stop barring the entry of humanitarian aid and withdraw from a strategic corridor along Gaza's border with Egypt. Hamas would also demand the release of more Palestinian prisoners in exchange for hostages, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks. Edan Alexander, 21, who grew up in Tenafly, New Jersey, was abducted from his military base during Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war, and is the last living American citizen held in Gaza.

There was no immediate comment from Israel, where government offices were closed for the weekly Sabbath. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office on Friday accused Hamas of "manipulation and psychological warfare" when the offer was initially made, before Hamas spelled out the conditions. The United States said it presented on Wednesday a proposal to extend the ceasefire a few more weeks as the sides negotiate a permanent truce. It said Hamas was claiming flexibility in public while pri-

vately making "entirely impractical" demands. Negotiations continued in Egypt after senior Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya arrived in Cairo on Friday. Egypt and Qatar served as key mediators with Hamas in reaching the ceasefire and have continued to host talks aimed at getting it back on track. There was no immediate comment from the mediators. Under the ceasefire agreement reached in January, Israel and Hamas were to begin negotiations over a second phase — in which Hamas would release all the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting truce — in early February, but so far only preparatory talks have been held. After the first phase ended at the beginning of this month, Israel said it had agreed to a new U.S. proposal in which Hamas would release half the remaining hostages in return for a vague commitment to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. Hamas rejected that offer, accusing Israel of backtracking on the signed agreement and trying to sabotage the truce.

Israel has barred the delivery of food, fuel and other supplies to Gaza's roughly 2 million Palestinians, and cut electricity to the territory, to pressure Hamas to accept the new proposal. The first phase of the truce, which took hold on Jan. 19, saw the release of 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight more in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. Israeli forces pulled back to a buffer zone along Gaza's border and allowed a surge of humanitarian aid. An Israeli official said last month that Israel will not withdraw from the so-called Philadelphia corridor, along the Gaza-Egypt border, as called for in the ceasefire agreement. They have cited the need to combat weapons smuggling. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 hostage. The group is still holding 59 hostages, 24 of whom are believed to be alive, after most of the rest were freed in ceasefire agreements. Israel's military offensive has killed over 48,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants, without providing evidence. The war has destroyed vast areas of Gaza, displaced most of the population and left nearly everyone dependent on international aid to survive.

Indian student Ranjani Srinivasan 'self-deports' from US after visa revoked over Palestine protests

GNS News Agency, March 17

New York: An Indian student who participated in pro-Palestine protests in the US has "self-deported" herself after her student visa was revoked. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has announced. The Department said on Friday that Ranjani Srinivasan "was involved in activities supporting Hamas, a terrorist organisation" and left the US on March 11 after her student visa was revoked by the State Department.

A citizen of India, she was a doctoral student in urban planning at Columbia University, the Ground Zero of student protests in support of Palestine and against Israel over Gaza that swept the US last year. The university saw the violent takeover of a campus building, and scores of students were arrested when the university called in the police to quell the protests. Noem said that it was "a privilege" to study in the US, but "when you advocate for violence and terrorism that privilege should be revoked, and you should not be in this country". Homeland Security Department said that it obtained a video of Srinivasan using an app of the Customs and Border Protection (CPB) agency to "self-deport". "I am glad to see one of the Columbia University terrorist sympathisers use the CBP Home app to self-deport", Noem said. She posted a video of Srinivasan at an airport. It was not clear if Srinivasan had been arrested in the protests or if she had expressed sympathy for Hamas because many of the protesters were only against Israel's attack on Gaza in retribution for the Hamas terrorist attack on it.

Self-deporting — or leaving voluntarily before authorities take action — avoids the risk of her being put on a US military aircraft and sent home like the three planeloads of



deportees who arrived in India. Srinivasan was doing research at Columbia's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. According to the school, she has a bachelor's degree from CEPT University in Ahmedabad and got her master's degree from Harvard with Fulbright Nehru and Inlaks Scholarships. On the school website, she is shown with the gender-neutral "they" pronoun rather than she. The site said that she had received support from the Lakshmi Mittal South Asia Institute at Harvard for her research, "Gold & Cyanide: Family, Caste, and the Post-extractive Landscape at Kolar Gold Fields". She had also worked for an environmental advocacy nonprofit in Washington on "frontier communities at risk from climate change" and as a researcher for the West Philadelphia Landscape Project (WPLP) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Israeli airstrike kills at least five in north Gaza town, medics say, amid ceasefire disputes



GNS News Agency, March 17

At least five Palestinians were killed, including two local journalists, and others wounded on Saturday (March 15, 2025) in an Israeli strike on Gaza's northern Beit Lahiya town, medics told Reuters, as Hamas' leaders hold Gaza ceasefire talks with mediators in Cairo. Several were critically injured as the strike hit a car, with casualties inside and outside the vehicle, the medics added. Witnesses and fellow journalists said the people in the car were on a mission for a charity called Al-Khair Foundation in Beit Lahiya, and they were accompanied by journalists and photographers when the strike hit them. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The incident underscores the fragility of the January 19 ceasefire agreement that halted large-scale fighting in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian health officials say dozens of people have been killed by Israeli fire despite the truce. Responding to some of the incidents reported by Gaza medics, the Israeli military says its forces have intervened to thwart threats by "terrorists" approaching its forces or planting bombs on the ground near where forces operate. Israel on second phase of ceasefire talks. Since a temporary first phase of the ceasefire expired on March 2, Israel has rejected opening the second phase of talks, which would require it to negotiate over a permanent end to the war, the main demand of Palestinian militant group Hamas. The incident coincided with a visit by Hamas' expelled Gaza chief, Khalil al-Hayya, to Cairo for further ceasefire talks aimed at resolving disputes with Israel that could risk a resumption of fighting in the enclave.

On Friday, Hamas said it had agreed to free an American-Israeli dual national if Israel begins the next phase of ceasefire talks towards a permanent end to the war, an offer Israel dismissed as "psychological warfare." Hamas said it had made the offer to release New Jersey native Edan Alexander, a 21-year-old soldier in the Israeli army, after receiving a proposal from mediators for negotiations on the second phase of a ceasefire deal. Israel says it wants to extend the ceasefire's temporary first phase, a proposal backed by U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff. Hamas says it will resume freeing hostages only under the second phase. The war began when Hamas carried out a cross-border raid into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and capturing 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent assault on Gaza has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, and reduced much of the territory to rubble and led to accusations of genocide and war crimes that Israel denies.

Late night Eid shopping frenzy grips streets around Charminar

Hyderabad: With a fortnight left for the Eid-ul-Fitr to be celebrated, late night shopping around Charminar has picked up. Scores of families are visiting the markets to shop for the merchandise sold at the two dozen odd wholesale and retail markets spread around two kilometres radius of Charminar monument.

Here one can buy traditional apparels for men, women and children, bangles, crockery, perfumes, home decor textiles, gold and pearl made jewellery, and footwear at the market.

Prices are comparatively lesser than those prevailing in other markets in the city. There are huge stocks and always a good space for picking up the latest designs," said Nuzrath Jahan, a woman shopper who came for shopping from King Kothi. The 'Abaya' worn in Middle East countries are stitched at local workshops and sold in the Shafran market, while crockery can be purchased at Osmania Bazaar right opposite the Shafran market.

Trump administration weighs travel ban on dozens of countries, memo says



GNS News Agency, March 17

U.S. President Donald Trump reacts as he meets NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte (not pictured), in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, D.C., U.S. Svelyn Hockstein/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab WASHINGTON. - The Trump administration is considering issuing sweeping travel restrictions for the citizens of dozens of countries as part of a new ban, according to sources familiar with the matter and an internal memo seen by Reuters. The memo lists a total of 41 countries divided into three separate groups. The first group of 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba and North Korea among others, would be set for a full visa suspension.

Get weekly news and analysis on U.S. politics and how it matters to the world with the Reuters Politics U.S. newsletter. Sign up here. In the second group, five countries -- Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar and South Sudan -- would face partial suspensions that would impact tourist and student visas as well as other immigrant visas, with some exceptions. In the third group, a total of 26 countries that includes Belarus, Pakistan and Turkmenistan among

others would be considered for a partial suspension of U.S. visa issuance if their governments "do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days", the memo said.

A U.S. official speaking on the condition of anonymity cautioned there could be changes on the list and that it was yet to be approved by the administration, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The New York Times first reported on the list of countries. The move harkens back to President Donald Trump's first term ban on travelers from seven majority-Muslim nations, a policy that went through several iterations before it was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2018.

Trump issued an executive order on January 20 requiring intensified security vetting of any foreigners seeking admission to the U.S. to detect national security threats. That order directed several cabinet members to submit by March 21 a list of countries from which travel should be partly or fully suspended because their "vetting and screening information is so deficient." Trump's directive is part of an immigration crackdown that he launched at the start of his second term. He previewed his plan in an October 2023 speech, pledging to restrict people from the Gaza Strip, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and "anywhere else that threatens our security." The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Reuters. Reporting by Humeysra Pamuk; Writing by Costas Pitas Editing by Sam Holmes Humeysra Pamuk is a senior foreign policy correspondent based in Washington DC. She covers the U.S. State Department, regularly traveling with U.S. Secretary of State. During her 20 years with Reuters, she has had postings in London, Dubai, Cairo and Turkey, covering everything from the Arab Spring and Syria's civil war to numerous Turkish elections and the Kurdish insurgency in the southeast. In 2017, she won the Knight-Bagehot fellowship program at Columbia University's School of Journalism. She holds a BA in International Relations and an MA on European Union studies.

US expels South Africa's ambassador, calls him 'race-baiting' America hater



WASHINGTON/JOHANNESBURG, (This March 14 story has been corrected to fix the spelling of Ebrahim Rasool's name in paragraph 4) The United States has expelled South Africa's ambassador, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Friday, calling the envoy a "race-baiting politician" who hates America and President Donald Trump. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

Ties between the United States and South Africa have deteriorated since Trump cut U.S. financial aid to the country, citing disapproval of its land policy and of its genocide case at the International Court of Justice against Washington's ally Israel. "South Africa's Ambassador to the United States is no longer welcome in our great country," Rubio posted on social media platform X. "We have nothing to discuss with him and so he is considered PERSONA NON GRATA." Rubio reposted an article from right-wing website Breitbart that quoted the envoy, Ebrahim Rasool, as saying on Friday that Trump was leading a white "supremacist" movement. South Africa's presidency on Satur-

day "noted the regrettable expulsion" of Rasool, saying in a statement it remained committed to building a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. Chrispin Phiri, spokesperson for South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation, posted on X that the government "will engage through the diplomatic channel." Rasool has failed to secure routine meetings with State Department officials and key Republican figures since Trump, a Republican, took office in January, the news website Semafor reported this week. It cited a South African diplomat as saying Rasool's pro-Palestinian views and criticism of Israel seemed to be the reason for him being shunt out. U.S.-South Africa ties have reached their "lowest point," said Patrick Gaspard, a former U.S. ambassador to South Africa. "There's too much at stake to not work towards the repair of this partnership." Rasool started his tenure by presenting his credentials to then-President Joe Biden on January 13, a week before Trump took office, according to the South African embassy's website. It said this was Rasool's second stint in Washington.

Trump has said, without citing evidence, that "South Africa is confiscating land" and that "certain classes of people" are being treated "very badly." South African-born billionaire Elon Musk, who is close to Trump, has said white South Africans have been the victims of "racist ownership laws." South African President Cyril Ramaphosa signed into law a bill in January aimed at making it easier for the state to expropriate land in the public interest, in some cases without compensating the owner. Ramaphosa has defended the policy and said the government had not confiscated any land. The policy was aimed at evening out racial disparities in land ownership in the Black-majority nation, he said. Reporting by Humeysra Pamuk in Washington and Olivia Kumwenda-Mtambo in Johannesburg; Additional reporting by Jasper Ward and Kanishka Singh in Washington; Editing by Rosalba O'Brien and William Mallard

Ecuador pitches US military base and free trade deal to Trump allies, sources say

WASHINGTON, GNS News Agency, March 17 Ecuadorean officials have told allies of U.S. President Donald Trump that they are interested in hosting a U.S. military base in the South American country, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the matter. The officials also said they were interested in inking a free trade deal with the United States, which has eluded the Andean nation, even as neighboring Colombia and Peru have had bilateral accords with the U.S. for over a decade, said the sources, who requested anonymity to describe private conversations.

The expressions of interest were delivered in recent weeks to Republican lobbyists in Washington close to the Trump administration, the sources said. It is unclear if the administration is itself aware of or interested in the proposals, and the White House National Security Council did not respond to a request for comment. The military base pitch is the latest unconventional plan advanced by the administration of Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa, who is trying to tamp down on crime and strengthen ties with Trump associates heading into a competitive April election.

Noboa announced a "strategic alliance" with Erik Prince - a prominent Trump supporter and founder of controversial private military firm Blackwater - to take on crime and narco-terrorism in the country of 17 million. Noboa, the 37-year-old heir to one of the country's biggest business fortunes, has publicly argued for bringing foreign military bases to Ecuador. The Ecuadorean legislature is in the early stages of a legislative process that could eliminate a constitutional ban on such facilities instituted in 2008 with the support of leftist former President Rafael Correa. The U.S. government had a military base on the environmentally sensitive Galapagos Islands during World War II and a separate base used largely to combat narcotics trafficking on the mainland until 2009, at which point Correa forced Washington to abandon the outpost. Several other small and medium-sized nations have been exploring unconventional ways of building ties with Washington, some of which appear designed to take advantage of Trump's transactional foreign policy impulses and willingness to entertain unconventional policy ideas.

Officials in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance, have traveled to Washington in recent weeks to pitch the Trump administration on a critical minerals deal between the two nations. Officials in El Salvador, governed by conservative President Nayib Bukele, a prominent Trump ally, have offered to host criminals deported from the U.S. in Salvadoran jails. Ecuador's government recently selected Washington-based Mercury Public Affairs to represent its interests with the Trump administration, according to a Monday filing with a Justice Department division that oversees foreign lobbying efforts. The filing outlining the lobbying contract does not include any reference to military bases. It does identify "migration, trade, and security issues, including anti-terrorism efforts" as potential areas of collaboration.

SpaceX's Starship will launch for Mars by 2026, human landings likely in 2031: Elon Musk

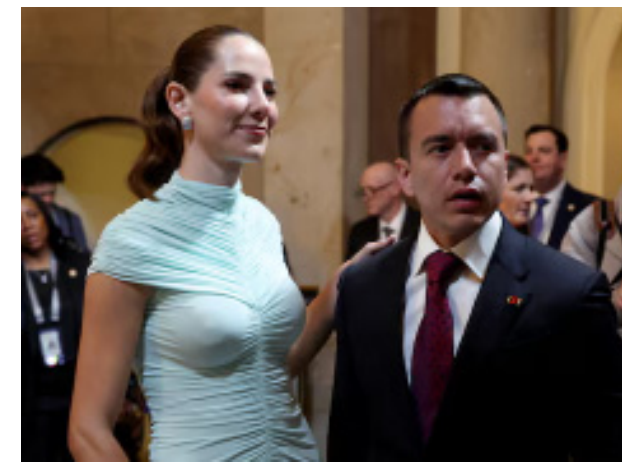
GNS News Agency, March 17

New Delhi: SpaceX's Starship and heavy booster — the world's biggest and most powerful rocket system — will launch for Mars by 2026, and human landings on the Red Planet will likely begin in 2031, said billionaire Elon Musk on Saturday. In a post shared on social media platform X, SpaceX CEO Musk said Starship will carry Tesla humanoid robot Optimus to Mars. If conditions look suitable for humans, it could start "as soon as 2029."

"Starship departs for Mars at the end of next year, carrying Optimus," Musk said. "If those landings go well, then human landings may start as soon as 2029, although 2031 is more likely," he added. The Starship — huge 30-foot-wide, 397-foot-tall rocket — is key to Musk's long-term vision of colonising Mars. Starship consists of a giant first-stage booster called Super Heavy and a 50-meter upper-stage spacecraft known as Starship.

Musk plans to shift at least one million people to Mars, he shared on X, last year. "Civilisation only passes the single-planet Great Filter when Mars can survive even if Earth supply ships stop coming," he added. "One day, a trip to Mars will be like a flight across the country." He also aims to build a base on the Moon. "Humanity should have a moon base, cities on Mars, and be out there among the stars," the X owner said.

Meanwhile, the Starship faced a setback earlier this



Ecuador is heading for a tight April 13 runoff election that will pit Noboa against leftist Luisa Gonzalez, a protegee of Correa. Noboa has campaigned on what he says has been a 15% cut in violent deaths last year, a reduction in prison violence and the capture of major gang leaders. He has vowed to keep deploying the military on the streets and in prisons to fight insecurity. The Noboa administration is also seeking to develop strategies alongside the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs to "fight narco-terrorism," according to the Monday filing with the Justice Department. Gonzalez, 47, has expressed opposition to the presence of foreign troops in Ecuador while calling for more efforts to fight the drug trade-related crime that has rocked the country in recent years. She has pledged to pursue corrupt judges and prosecutors and roll out a social spending plan in the most violent areas.

One of the sources familiar with the Ecuadoreans' interactions with Republican lobbyists said they were likely asking for too many deliverables in too short a time. The State Department tends to limit bilateral engagement directly before elections so as not to appear to be supporting a particular party, the source noted. Trump has pledged to fight narcotics trafficking in Latin America, and he has at times expressed an interest in expanding U.S. hard power. He has, for instance, threatened to invade Panama, floated acquiring Greenland and said the U.S. could effectively take over Gaza. But his administration's engagement with Latin America has not always followed an obvious pattern. He has repeatedly threatened to slap 25% across-the-board tariffs on Mexico - which partially took effect earlier in March - amid dissatisfaction with that country's attempts to combat femoral trafficking, while at the same time complimenting Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. His administration has made a deportation deal with Venezuela, a regional foe, but also declined to renew Chevron's license to operate there, a move which has further isolated that nation economically.



month, with SpaceX losing contact with the spacecraft shortly after the launch of the eighth test flight. About seven minutes after liftoff on March 7, Starship's giant first-stage booster, known as Super Heavy was caught by the Starbase's launch tower, using the structure's "chopstick" arms, called "Mechazilla," on the launch tower. However, the Starship spacecraft lost altitude control and lost communication with the ground. "Final contact with Starship came approximately 9 minutes and 30 seconds after liftoff," SpaceX said. SpaceX had lost contact with Ship even during the Seventh test flight. To fly the giant Starship again, SpaceX will need clearance from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has sought an investigation.

Angry Canadians get their 'elbows up' in face of Trump threats

GNS News Agency, March 17

At first it was the threat, and then the reality, of tariffs. Now, U.S. President Donald Trump's talk of Canada's forced annexation — no longer laughed off as a joke - has really angered a population better known for its politeness. Canadians are rallying for their country and seeing a resurgence in nationalism, as Canada-U.S. relations top the list of issues preoccupying residents, according to recent polls. "Elbows up," a hockey term conveying readiness to fight, is the new rallying cry — emblazoned on clothing, headlining rallies and the title of a new hat dedicated to its first episode to the practicalities of creating a civil defence corps. It remains unclear how long Trump's tariffs will be in place or what is behind his aspirations for Canada to become the 51st U.S. state. But 11 peeved Canadians Reuters spoke with said they believed irrevocable damage had been done.

Canadians are boycotting U.S. goods and cancelling U.S. travel plans. Provinces are taking American alcohol off store shelves. The sense of betrayal runs deep. "It's a mix of concern, frustration, anger. Our longstanding friend and ally has turned against us and we don't really know what to do," said Peter Wall, an Elbows Up rally organizer. Wall and a handful of other organizers put together a rally on Parliament Hill in Canada's capital Ottawa in a matter of days. The event, which featured speakers, a band and a coat check for hockey sticks to facilitate a game afterward, attracted more than 1,000 people on March 9. More events are planned in Toronto and elsewhere in coming weeks. Signs at the Ottawa rally criticized Trump as an imperialist, saying "Elbows up" or "True north strong and peevish," a play on lyrics from Canada's national anthem. There was no shortage of Canadian flags. Journalist Jordan Heath-Rowlings, who channelled his frustration into a new podcast called Elbows Up, compares the state of



Canada's relationship with the U.S. to the shock of a divorce. "All the things in your life you maybe took for granted are, all of a sudden, gone. You have to redefine yourself as a person and I think that's where we're at as a country," he said. "I think a lot of Canadians feel really hurt. I think a lot of Canadians are really angry. I've been feeling that way myself, for sure."

Comedian and actor Shaun Majumder, who recently moved back to Canada with his family after years living in Los Angeles and who performed at the "Elbows Up" rally, thinks Canadians will look back at this time in 50 years and see it as an inflection point. "Was that a shift in our maturity where we finally found our identity? And it's not beavers, it's not mounties, it's not politeness - there's something underneath it all," he said. In a parting speech on Sunday, before new Prime Minister Mark Carney was sworn in on Friday, former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also used the term. "We're a country that will be diplomatic when we can but fight when we must. Elbows up!"

US designated South Korea a 'sensitive' country amid nuclear concerns

WASHINGTON/SEOUL, GNS News Agency, March 17 The U.S. Department of Energy has designated ally South Korea a "sensitive" country, a spokesperson said on Friday, after the South Korean president briefly imposed martial law and amid talk of Seoul potentially developing nuclear weapons. The administration of then-President Joe Biden put South Korea on the lowest tier of the Sensitive and Other Designated Countries List in January shortly before Biden left office, the DOE said in a written response to Reuters queries. The department did not explain why the Asian nation was added to the list and did not indicate that President Donald Trump was inclined to reverse the measure. The spokesperson said Seoul faces no new restrictions on bilateral cooperation in science and technology.

South Korea's foreign ministry said the government was taking the matter seriously and in close communication with Washington. "We will actively negotiate to ensure that there is no negative impact on energy, science and technology cooperation between South Korea and the United States," the ministry said in a statement.

The DOE list of sensitive countries includes China, Taiwan, Israel, Russia, Iran and North Korea, with Tehran and Pyongyang designated as "terrorist", according to a 2017 document posted on the department's website. President Yoon Suk Yeol and then-Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun are among officials who raised the prospect that Seoul would be forced to pursue nuclear weapons amid fears over Pyongyang's weapons program and concerns about the U.S. alliance.

Yoon and Kim have been indicted on charges of insurrection over Yoon's six-hour declaration of martial law in December. Yoon was impeached and his presidential powers suspended while a court decides whether to remove him from office. Yoon backed off rhetoric about a nuclear weapons program after negotiating with Biden a 2023 agreement under which Washington is to give Seoul more insight into U.S. planning to deter and respond to a nuclear incident in the region. In return, Seoul renewed a pledge not to pursue a nuclear bomb of its own and said it would abide by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, which it has signed. That, however, has not been enough to ease doubts over U.S. defense commitments that have fueled calls for a South Korean nuclear arsenal.

Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul said last month that nuclear weapons were not "off the table", though it was premature to talk about such a plan. "Given that international



situations are developing in unpredictable directions, this is a principled response that we must prepare for all possible scenarios," Cho told a parliamentary hearing. Daryl Kimball, executive director of the nonprofit Arms Control Association, said that in light of such "provocative" statements, South Korea is a proliferation risk and the DOE was prudent to put the country on its list. "Listing the ROK as a proliferation-sensitive country should rule out any chance of a South Korean request for U.S. approval to enrich uranium and reprocessing spent fuel... to produce nuclear weapons," Kimball said, citing the country's formal name, the Republic of Korea. The handling of the designation raised concerns in Seoul. Cho told parliament on Tuesday that his ministry had had no formal communication from the Biden administration and only heard about the possible designation from an informal tip-off. Countries may appear on the Energy Department's list for reasons of national security, nuclear nonproliferation or support for terrorism, though inclusion does not necessarily indicate an adversarial relationship with the United States. "Currently there are no new restrictions on bilateral science and technology cooperation with the ROK," the DOE said. "The Energy Department looks forward to collaborating with the ROK to advance our mutual interests." Though the designation does not prohibit scientific or technical cooperation, visits to the listed countries and cooperation undergo an internal review beforehand, the department said. Reporting by Timothy Gardner, David Brunnstrom in Washington, and Ju-min Park and Josh Smith in Seoul; Editing by William Mallard and Sam Holmes Timothy reports on energy and environment policy and is based in Washington, D.C.

Near historical Hampi, a heinous crime

Study finds prior flu exposure may boost immunity against H5N1 bird flu



New Delhi: Younger adults and children would benefit more from H5N1 vaccines, even those not tailored specifically to the current strain circulating in birds and cattle, finds a study. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania in the US showed that prior exposures to specific types of seasonal influenza viruses promote cross-reactive immunity against the H5N1 avian influenza virus.

In the study, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, older adults who were exposed to seasonal flu viruses that circulated before 1968 were found to be more likely to have antibodies that bind to the H5N1 avian flu virus. "We know that early childhood influenza exposures can elicit immune responses that last a lifetime," said Scott Hensley, Professor of Microbiology at the university. "We found that antibody responses that were primed by H1N1 and H3N2 viruses decades ago can cross-react to H5N1 avian viruses circulating today. Most of these cross-reactive antibodies cannot prevent infections, but they will likely limit disease if we have an H5N1 pandemic," he added. H5N1 viruses have circulated in birds for many years, but a new version — clade 2.3.4.4b H5N1 virus — emerged more recently and has since spread among cattle. This current H5N1 strain does not bind well to receptors in the human upper airway, but widespread circulation in mammals could lead to mutations that help the virus infect human airway cells and increase transmission. If this occurs, H5N1 could potentially start spreading from human to human. Current influenza vaccines primarily elicit antibodies that recognise hemagglutinin proteins and prevent them from infecting a person's cells. The team tested blood samples from over 150 people born between 1927 and 2016 for antibodies targeting the stalk proteins of different influenza viruses, including H5N1. They found that blood samples from older adults born before 1968 who were likely first exposed to H1N1 or H2N2 in childhood had higher levels of antibodies that could bind to the stalk of the H5N1 virus.

the Church of North India (CNI) and Bishop of the Diocese of Agra, CNI. The last post on Bibhas' Instagram, dated July 19, 2023, was a letter from a friend and reads like a prophecy: "Yes, when you leave this world, you take nothing with you but memories of what you did. Leave nothing undone. Or unsaid. We all want to be comfortable here on Earth, but having an abundance of things is not necessary. The best thing to remember is to keep on the right path with God. Everything else will fade away."

On March 6, soon after dinner, Karthika, who hails from Tamil Nadu and has been running the homestay at Aneundi for the past four years, took Daniel, Aliza, Pankaj, and Bibhas stargazing. According to Rajkumar, a resort owner, there are around 500 resorts and homestays within a 15-kilometre radius of Hampi, which has lush paddy fields and shrublands dotted with stone structures. Most of these are located in villages such as Aneundi, Basapura, Sanapura, Hanumana Halli, and Anjanahalli in Koppal on the northern side of the Tungabhadra river. The ancient stone monuments of Hampi, which are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), are located on the southern bank of the river in Vijayanagara district. The river serves as a border between Koppal and Vijayanagara, separating the ruins from the resorts and homestays.

Ravichandra, a local resident and the owner of a resort in Sanapura, who spoke to the survivors, says the group of five hopped onto scooters and left for Sanapura lake, located about 8 km from the homestay. At the Tungabhadra Left Bank Canal bund, Daniel played his guitar, while the rest counted stars. According to the police complaint filed by Karthika, three men approached the group on a motorcycle on the narrow bund road half an hour later. Speaking in Kannada, they asked where they could get petrol. "Sanapura," she replied.

Her complaint says one of the men then came closer and demanded 100. Karthika refused to pay the strangers. When the other two men also began demanding money, Bibhas offered them ₹20. Enraged by the amount, the three men began verbally abusing the group and hitting them with stones and Daniel's guitar. When Pankaj, Daniel, and Bibhas tried to stop two of the men from hitting the women, the third man pushed all three of them into the canal. "Pankaj says he did not know how to swim, so Daniel came to his rescue," says Ravichandra. Bibhas tried to climb the canal bund. "But one of the attackers hit him on the head and he fell back into the canal," says Ravichandra. Meanwhile, according to the complaint, two of the attackers hit Karthika with stones and raped her. Seeing the third man assault Aliza, they joined him and raped her too. When the women's screams got louder, the attackers snatched their mobile phones, took ₹9,500 in cash from Karthika, and vanished into the night. When Daniel and Pankaj returned to the crime spot, they found that the women were bleeding, says Ravichandra. There was no sign of Bibhas. When the panicked group could not find him, they went to the nearest

resort.

Ravichandra, who was at a family function, received a distress call at about 11.30 p.m. from the resort. "I called some hoteliers and friends and asked them to rush to the resort and assist the group in every possible way," he says. He adds that he called Somashekhar Juttal, the Circle Inspector of Police attached to Gangavathi Rural, and shared the location of the victims. About past midnight, Ravichandra arrived at the resort. "The police were already there. Within a few minutes, an ambulance came and took the victims to a government hospital in Gangavathi (about 20 km away)," he says. Ravichandra joined his friends and the police in the search for Bibhas. "We searched until 4 in the morning, but couldn't find him," he says.

On the morning of March 7, following the complaint lodged by Karthika, a First Information Report was registered at Gangavathi Rural police station under Sections 309(6) (robbery), 70(1) (gang rape), 109 (attempt to murder) read with 3(5) (joint criminal liability) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. The same day, the Koppal police recovered Bibhas' body near a powerhouse gate at Mallapur in the district. Friends say Bibhas, who could "never make an enemy" and who was "the life of any gathering", died trying to save lives. At Bibhas' memorial service, Jenipher Walker, whose older brother was Bibhas' friend and who had flown down from Delhi to Odisha, says, "I don't understand why anyone would be so angry with Bibhas. He knew nothing but kindness." Karthika, Aliza, Pankaj, and Daniel were treated for a couple of days and then discharged from the hospital. While a traumatised Karthika returned to the homestay, Aliza, who had been treated for injuries, wanted to go back to Israel, says Koppal Superintendent of Police Ram L. Arasiddi. The police accompanied her to the airport. On March 7, the day Bibhas' body was found, Arasiddi formed six teams to nab the culprits. "The teams examined the CCTV footage installed in the shops along the road connected to the crime spot," says the officer investigating the case. "The footage led us to a locality that is predominantly inhabited by the working population in Gangavathi." The police identified the three culprits as Mallesh Dasara (22), Chetan Sai (21), and Sharanabasavaraj (30). All three did irregular masonry work. The police found Mallesh and Chetan, but Sharanabasavaraj managed to escape.

"Two of the accused were arrested and have admitted to the crime. We are investigating whether they have any criminal background," Arasiddi said at a press conference. "Tracing Sharanabasavaraj was a challenge as he did not use a mobile phone. We kept all the phones of his close friends and relatives under surveillance in the hope that he would contact them," says a police officer.

After escaping, the accused made his first call to one of the numbers that were under police surveillance. "He made the call from the mobile phone of a passer-by in Raichur and asked for money," says the officer.

Modern day summitry, its perils and prospects



diktat to Mr. Zelenskyy to accept the deal or else have the U.S. opt out of the Ukraine-Russia imbroglio was a 'fait accompli'.

Mr. Zelenskyy's embarking on a new variant of summit diplomacy was by going to Washington with an offer to seal an agreement with the U.S. on handing over many billions of dollars worth of 'mineral rights', in repayment for past U.S. military aid to Ukraine.

The sequel to this is in some ways even more problematic. Europe, caught in the cross hairs of the Trump-Zelenskyy exchanges, was seen scrambling to put in place an alternative. A hurriedly arranged meeting, in London, of 19 European leaders, put forward a fresh menu of sentiments, but which was lacking in substance. The declaration by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom that Europe must "do the heavy lifting" for the future defence of Ukraine at a summit which took place "at a crossroads in history today", further adding that his country was 'willing to put boots on the ground and planes in the air to support a deal', which was met with acclaim. He did not, however, forget to add — possibly as an afterthought — that no two countries were more closely aligned than the U.K. and the U.S. The latter sentiment is, perhaps, more real. The dominant sentiment in Europe, meanwhile, appears to be that the U.S. under Mr. Trump is in no mood to pursue former U.S. President Joe Biden's strategy of supporting Zelenskyy's Ukraine.

The Trump-Zelenskyy exchanges are seen in some quarters as further enhancing Mr. Trump's reputation in the realm of global politics today as being a 'bully', but this may not be all too true. In the meeting held between Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi during the Indian leader's brief working visit on February 13, 2025, there was little evidence of 'bullying' despite Mr. Trump's opposition to India's tariffs and tariff barriers. The U.S. President did, however, lash out at the tariff barriers erected by India, warning that there could be serious consequences as a result. The exchanges were, however, civil and did not tantamount to 'bullying'. No doubt, the U.S. side sought contentions and Mr. Modi did make some, but there is no evidence that he buckled under a Trump onslaught. The general consensus among analysts worldwide is that as far as the Modi-Trump meeting is concerned, the latter was not the obvious winner in the exchanges. Instead, the two 'strong leaders' seemed to adhere to Newton's 'Third Law of Motion', in which there are no winners or losers. One should not, however, overlook 'the bait' the U.S. President held out to India — the sale of F-35 fighter jets to India. The Joint Statement issued at the end of the Modi-Trump talks was, however, 'a masterpiece in obfuscation', long on possible collaboration while containing a gratuitous nod to India's security concerns across Asia. The hidden agenda was, no doubt, on how best to increase U.S. defence sales to India. The offer of possibly the best aircraft in the world, the F-35 (which has so far not been available to India) was the 'icing on the cake' since this was a proposal that the Indian Air Force could be expected to use to pressurise the civil administration into accepting it as a counterweight to China. All in all, this was the best of possible outcomes, but given Mr. Trump's penchant for producing surprises, the outcome of the first meeting between Mr. Modi and President Trump (in his second avatar) is probably yet to be determined. The Indian Prime Minister did resort to various stratagems to prepare the ground for his meeting with Mr. Trump. The meetings with the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, the National Security Adviser, Michael Waltz, and industrialist and Tesla CEO, Elon Musk, prior to the Trump meet reveal a degree of careful preparation, given the U.S. President's image as someone who makes few concessions. In any case, there are no set guidelines for a summit meeting of this kind. Further, in summit diplomacy, there are seldom clear cut winners or losers.

A school closure that must be called out

essay in this context because both are minority languages. Both are unlikely to be amplified by the market nor can they be considered necessary in getting employment. However, both these minority languages have contrasting fates due to the socio-political power wielded by the community which seeks to promote them — one is recognised by the state while the other is neglected.

The need to confer state recognition becomes all the more important in the case of Adivasi communities because their culture has an oral tradition which includes their originary myths, religious beliefs and tales of the past. In the present context, given the rapid erosion of the Adivasi identity due to the clearing of forests, increasing urbanisation and rampant marketisation of society, the primary site of the construction of the Adivasi identity (historical memory which is transmitted orally) may face danger. The extinction of an Adivasi language might cause irreparable loss to that identity. Therefore, Adivasi languages must be accorded special status to ensure their protection. It is ironic that those who claim to follow the Constitution, which derives its legitimacy from 'we, the people', recognise and promote the Devbhasha but neglect the Janbhasha (language of the people) of the Adivasi people. This gross moral failure must be addressed. It can be remedied, with the first step being the recognition of the Gondi-speaking school in focus and then expanding such schools. This would be in line with the spirit of the Constitution as well.

Syneriq Global opens GCC for AI products, solutions and consulting services



On the occasion, the company also demonstrated its latest AI-powered digital platform and solutions (Zyrix, KITAP and DQ Gateway) developed by its innovation team in Hyderabad.

Hyderabad: Syneriq Global opened its new AI products, solutions and consulting services GCC in Hyderabad, enabled by Mergen Global. The new state-of-the-art 40,000 sqft facility, established with an investment of Rs 50 crore will strengthen Syneriq Global's position in the global digital sector.

Additionally, the group launched new AI platform, Zyrix, focused on driving innovation and advancing product engineering. A press release said, for more than 10 years, Syneriq Global has led digital transformation efforts, offering specialised services in product engineering, quality engineering, and expertise in Salesforce, ServiceNow, Databricks, and Snowflake. The company demonstrated its latest AI-powered digital platform and solutions (Zyrix, KITAP and DQ Gateway) developed by its innovation team in Hyderabad. To expand its agility, and scalable approach to meet customer expectations worldwide, Syneriq Global will double its workforce to 1,500 employees across its facilities globally. Syneriq Global is a global enterprise with a network of technology companies having operations in the United States of America, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, Hyderabad, and Visakhapatnam.



The order to close down the only Gondi-medium school in a village of Maharashtra raises important questions. The school was started in Mohgaon village in the Fifth Schedule area of the Gadchiroli district, in 2019, as a result of a resolution by the gram panchayat, for tribal students to achieve better learning outcomes by imparting primary education in their mother tongue. This initiative was in consonance with Article 29 of the Constitution, which provides minorities the right to preserve distinct languages, scripts and cultures, and Article 350(a) which mandates that the state should make adequate provisions so that children of minority groups may receive instruction in their mother tongue. However, the local administration has argued that as the school is not registered under the Right to Education Act, 2009, its standards cannot be monitored. Non-recognition would also jeopardise the future of students when they transition to higher classes. However, an education officer has said that in case of closure, the students will be 'absorbed' in other schools.

While the objection of the administration is couched in bureaucratic language, it must be emphasised that the question of recognition is fundamentally a question of power, and only derivatively that of procedure. Non-recognition of the school is linked to the structural and socio-political subordination of the Adivasi communities owing to the normative bias of the state against their language and culture. Therefore, spotlighting the moral and political context of this 'bureaucratic' refusal by the local administration becomes important.

Jawaharlal Nehru was of the firm view that the Adivasi communities must grow according to their own genius. His view was informed by the historical experience of the past two centuries which saw many tribal communities being driven to the verge of extinction as a result of the vicious violence unleashed by the colonial state across the world. Therefore, the Constitution has provisions to preserve and protect the tribal way of life — rights over land, language, culture and customs. These provisions are intended to enable tribal communities to participate in the process of nation-building while guarding against the loss of their identity.

However, the forces of absorption, which operate in the secular and religious realms, have had an immensely deleterious impact on the tribal communities since Independence. In the secular realm, absorption is carried out by the state and the market, while in the religious realm, absorption is carried out through the denigration, distortion and erasure of tribal religious beliefs. Both these forces of absorption complement each other. This particular case, of the school's possible closure, is one of absorption through the state which is operationalised through the non-recognition of the elements of tribal culture. This is reflected most clearly in the current status of Adivasi languages in the Constitution. Out of the 22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule, major tribal languages such as Gondi and Bhili are absent. Gondi, which according to the 2011 Census, is spoken by more than 29 lakh people primarily across six States, is not included within the Eighth Schedule. Therefore, the state has no obligation to promote it at the national level.

On the contrary, Sanskrit, which is considered the Devbhasha or the language of the gods, is spoken by less than 25,000 people across the country, is listed in the Eighth Schedule. The contrast between Sanskrit and Gondi is nec-

Struggling with sleep? Here's why strength training can help



muscle fibres sustain tiny tears when you lift weights. These signal the brain to trigger deeper sleep, which is essential for muscle repair and recovery.

Why strength training is good for old-age sleeplessness

Older adults may have trouble sleeping due to chronic pain from ailments like arthritis or muscle weakening. Strength training can lessen pain and discomfort by increasing muscle mass and enhancing joint stability. Additionally, improving mobility via muscle and bone strength may lessen the restlessness that usually interferes with sleep. Strength exercises calm the brain. Strength exercise improves mental health by lowering anxiety, boosting confidence and creating a sense of success. This can eventually lead to a more tranquil mind, which will make it simpler to unwind before bed. Other than strength training, massages also help because they are a passive exercise. People who do pranayama, yoga and functional training are certainly bound to get a good amount of quality sleep. Try recreational sports in the evening like badminton, volleyball, tennis or football, as both guarantee a good night's sleep.

Which routines work best?

Lifting weights, working out using resistance bands, squats, push-ups and sit-ups work best. The key to effective strength training is repetition. You should perform sets of resistance exercises that include up to 12 repetitions apiece. Begin with one set of each activity per workout and gradually increase to multiple sets once they are comfortable. Squats are a great full-body exercise as they target the legs and core. Push-ups strengthen the chest, shoulders, and triceps. Rows target the back and biceps while an overhead press strengthens the shoulders and upper back. Research suggests that exercises could be an alternative or complementary approach to existing therapies for sleep problems, particularly given that exercise is inexpensive, accessible, and generally safe.

Sleep has a direct relationship with your activity quotient. It comes automatically because the body does want to get into passivity after hyperactivity. Everybody has different ideas about how much sleep is sufficient. However, the average adult requires 7 to 9 hours each night. Many adults experience brief episodes of sleeplessness at some point. Days or weeks may pass during this time. Stress or a traumatic experience is typically the cause of short-term sleeplessness. But other people have long-term insomnia, also termed chronic insomnia. This continues for at least three months. The primary issue can be insomnia, or it might be connected to other illnesses or medications. Studies have now shown that strength training is better for sleep than simple aerobic exercise. Strength training or resistance exercises boost muscular repair, raising hormone levels that support deeper sleep and lowering stress and anxiety.

What happens when you do regular strength training?

It balances stress hormones like cortisol and melatonin, which controls sleep patterns. It can increase levels of hormones like testosterone and growth hormone, which have been linked to deeper and more restful sleep. Your

Stress raises stroke risk in younger women: Neurologist tells you how to unwind



Stress is riskier for women than men as it triggers brain strokes in them, according to a recent study published in the journal Neurology. Researchers found a link between chronic stress and stroke risk in younger women (ages 18-49) but not in men. They also found that moderate stress levels were associated with a 78 per cent higher risk in women. While the team at Helsinki University Hospital, Finland, found an association between stress and strokes, they didn't list it as a direct cause. However, even this association is important as stress can contribute to high blood pressure and inflammation, both of which are high-risk triggers for strokes. The researchers recruited 426 people between 18 and 49, all of whom had an ischemic stroke and about half of whom were women. The team had another group of 426 people who had never had a stroke. Surveys revealed that those who had strokes experienced significantly higher levels of stress. According to Dr PN Renjen, senior consultant, neurology, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Delhi, "Women are more sensitive to stress hormones. Besides, they have more stressors as they multitask between work and home, still carrying the heft of care-giving."

How is stress a big risk factor for stroke?

Chronic stress can elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of sugar and fat in the blood, creating conditions for forming blood clots, which block blood vessels in the brain, leading to a stroke. Additionally, stress may lead to unhealthy lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol consumption, and poor diet, further increasing susceptibility to stroke.

Why do women tend to suffer more from stress than men?

Biologically, women are more sensitive to stress hormones like the corticotropin-releasing factor (CRF), with their neurons binding more tightly to these hormones and showing lesser adaptive responses than men. Socially, women face added pressures from caregiving responsibilities, workplace inequities, and societal expectations. These cause depression, anxiety disorders and emotional exhaustion.

Research highlights that younger women report higher stress levels due to limited coping strategies at earlier life stages.

What should women do to lower their stress levels?

Women can manage stress effectively by adopting healthy coping mechanisms such as exercise, mindfulness practices like yoga or meditation, and seeking emotional support from friends or professionals. Engage in hobbies or self-care activities. It is also important for women to recognize the signs of chronic stress early and address underlying causes such as workload or relationship issues through structured problem-solving or counselling.

What should your immediate response be to a stressful situation?

For immediate stress management, techniques like counting to ten before reacting, practising positive self-talk, or stepping away from the situation can help you regain composure. Just do deep breathing exercises to activate your body's relaxation response, reducing heart rate and tension. Mindfulness meditation is another effective technique, encouraging focus on the present moment and breaking the cycle of anxious thoughts. Physical activity, such as a brisk walk or yoga, can release endorphins, improving mood and reducing stress hormones.

In Karnataka, efforts on to combat the challenge of a hidden disability in newborns: hearing impairment

As late identification of hearing problems among the newborns can result in permanent hearing loss, early screening is being done on a priority in Karnataka, with the Mysuru-based All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH), a premier institute in the field of speech and hearing, under the Union Ministry of Health and Family, successfully running a Newborn Screening (NBS) programme.

Under the NBS, newborns are screened for communication disorders before they are discharged from the hospital they are born in. To do this, AIISH has collaborated with several hospitals to conduct screening programmes to detect hearing impairment and other developmental disabilities that can affect speech and language development. The screening has been helping in early intervention for those identified with the disorders, as any delay in the identification poses a risk, and affects successful management of children with hearing loss, according to AIISH. AIISH has been running campaigns for early interventions and has joined hands with various hospitals in Mysuru and elsewhere in the State, besides select locations in other parts of the country. "Children born with hearing loss will not develop speech since they don't hear it and therefore early interventions are a must," said experts at AIISH here. AIISH Mysuru has been stressing on early identification and intervention on hearing issues among infants within three months of the child's birth.

According to AIISH, the first three years of life is the most crucial period for acquiring speech and language skills. Babies acquire speech and language from the time they are born, and one of the ways they learn is through hearing. If they have any problem with hearing and/or other disorders they may have delayed speech and language development, it explains. As part of NBS, over 60,000 infants are screened every year using state-of-art technology within seven days of their birth at the identified hospitals. The newborns who did not pass the screening test were evaluated in detail within two months of their birth to confirm the presence of hearing loss. Earlier data said about 3 in 1,000 newborns are known to have permanent hearing loss. But recent data from NBS says it is 5 in 1,000 newborns and for about two of these infants, the hearing loss is permanent. These infants typically won't have any overt signs due to

which the hearing loss goes undetected unless a hearing screening test is conducted. It is important to know that hearing loss can be accurately identified right at birth through audiological tests, the institute said in a note during the expansion of NBS. "Over 95% of hearing loss cases stem from damage to the inner ear, which is often not visible to the naked eye. It is called a hidden disability," explain AIISH's audiologists Indira C.P. and Sandeep M., from the Department of Prevention of Communication Disorders.

The only reliable methods for detecting hearing loss in newborns are objective tests like otoacoustic emissions (OAE) and auditory brainstem responses (ABR). Without these tests, hearing loss may go undetected, preventing children from developing speech. It is scientifically well-established that early intervention is crucial, they explain. Many hospitals in Mysuru are collaborating with the AIISH for newborn screening. The 1-3-6 rule recommends that all newborns undergo hearing loss screening at one month of age. At-risk infants should have a diagnostic assessment at three months, and intervention should start at six months. "Following these timelines will help children with hearing loss develop speech and communication skills on par with their hearing peers," the audiologists advice, highlighting the significance of early identification of hearing loss in infants. However, AIISH, says that the age of identification in India is late -- beyond 3 years. It is said based on the reports that less than 1% of newborns in India are screened for hearing loss. By the time parents notice signs of hearing difficulties such as a lack of response to sounds, it is often too late. This leads to significant developmental challenges for the child and puts an immense burden of hearing disability on the family and society, according to experts at AIISH. The All India Institute of Speech and Hearing in Mysuru. File photograph. Consequently, AIISH has joined hands with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Karnataka, to educate medical teams working under Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) and District Early Intervention Centre (DEIC) on early screening of communication disorders in children. AIISH collaborates with District Early Intervention Center (DEIC), Mysuru, with the purpose of carrying out newborn screening in the taluk hospitals on a quarterly basis.

A many splendored nut: studying the health benefits of eating almonds regularly



in multiple favours, with research on into charming, and tasty food pairings with almonds. Harbinder Maan, associate director, trade, marketing and stewardship, ABC, who spearheads the flavour side of the business says: "Today, almonds come in more forms than any other tree nut." The almond industry might have also benefited, in recent times, from seemingly increasing gluten allergies among people in different parts of the world, as it provides flour and milk that are gluten free, and vegan options, explains Emily Fleischmann, vice president, global market development, ABC. As far as allergies go, while nut allergies might be increasing, studies show that less than 1% of the population have a tree nut (as is the almond) allergy, and less than 0.5% have almond allergies, thus not of significance to hamper use of the nut itself, Ms. Hemler explains.

Move over tea, olive oil, turmeric, and milk: there's a tiny seed that might have just out-distanced all these foods in terms of most research being conducted on it. In the last couple of decades, the humble almond, it turns out, is right on top of a list of foods that are attracting a great deal of research and funding, as more benefits are being dragged out of its kernel, after splitting apart the hull and shell. Reportedly, over 200 peer-reviewed publications that link almonds to various health benefits have been out, these past 20 years. Among the benefits this nearly frenetic research has laid bare are protection for heart health, an edge in weight management, salutary effects on blood sugar, cholesterol, and gut health, and assisting with post-exercise recovery, not to mention, even skin care, and keeping wrinkles at bay.

The energy, and ostensibly, funding behind this activity comes from the Almond Board of California (ABC), established in 1950, and tasked with promoting almond consumption in both the domestic and international markets, but also with ensuring sustainable growing techniques, and of course, promoting research on the health benefits hidden in the nut. The Board actively works with nutritionists and dietitians across the world to work in an effort to integrate almonds, in some form, into the diet. About 4% of the Board's funds are budgeted for research and innovation, which includes nutritional research. To get a sense of the finances at play, the ABC successfully secured US \$ 7 million in funding from the United States Department of Agriculture, besides US \$ 3.41 million for market access and US \$ 2,21,000 in foreign market development and US \$ 250,000 in emerging markets funding in 2024. Key among the international locations that the ABC targets is India, a country, they acknowledge, that makes things easy for them, with the almond already embedded in local cultures, and food practices. It is also the second-biggest international market for almonds, after the United States itself. In 2023-24, Indian shipments from California amounted to 400 million pounds, a four-time increase since a decade ago.

What's in the nut?

Here are some basic facts about the almond, just to lay the ground for the powerhouse claims that researchers have made about the nut: one ounce or 28 grams of almonds, comprising roughly 23 nuts apparently pack in 6 grams of protein, 4 grams of fibre, 9 grams of monounsaturated fats, and a smattering of Vitamin E, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, riboflavin (Vitamin B), magnesium and iron. It is of course well known that proteins are building blocks, and help build and preserve and maintain bones, muscle, skin, nails, and confer satiety, while monounsaturated fats help lower harmful cholesterol, and increase protective HDL cholesterol. The multiple benefits that vitamins and minerals confer are also well documented. As Elena Hemler, the nutrition programme lead with ABC, says, "Almonds are incredibly nutrient dense." She adds that emerging areas of research include sleep benefits, healthy ageing, and impacts on cancer. "Post COVID-19," Clarice Turner, president and CEO, ABC, says, "there has been a great deal of interest in studying what we put on our plates, and healthy stuff in our bodies." This has also spurred interest in scientifically establishing the perceived beneficial effects of almonds for humans, as a healthy snack.

Almonds are also very versatile today, coming in as many as 14 forms, including oils, kernels, slivers, flour, milk, butter, coming with the shell, skin, blanched, or roasted and

With drug Empagliflozin going off patent, doctors look forward to price reduction, benefitting diabetic, heart and kidney patients

Earlier this week, German manufacturer Boehringer Ingelheim's patent to manufacture Empagliflozin, a medication to treat type 2 diabetes mellitus, expired in India. Empagliflozin is sold under the brand name Jardiance. "Empagliflozin belongs to the SGLT-2i group of drugs. (Sodium glucose transporter inhibitor) drugs. These drugs have shown multiple benefits, including weight loss, control of diabetes, prevention of heart failures, heart attacks and kidney damage, said V. Mohan, chairman, Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai. "Now that the drug is going off patent, it will be prescribed more," he said. Until the year 2000, Indian diabetologists prescribed only three classes of drugs - metformin, sulfonylureas and insulin. But these medications can cause hypoglycaemia. During this time, research to improve the control of diabetes was ongoing, and gliptins and gliflozins were the answers. These two new classes of drugs not only controlled blood sugar without causing hypoglycaemia, but also protected the heart and kidneys. Gliptins were introduced in 2006 but were expensive. A few years ago the manufacture of these drugs became universal.

With the end of patent, the price of 25mg tablet of empagliflozin which until till now cost ₹70 per tablet, could cost ₹15 to 20. A 10mg tablet will cost ₹10 to ₹15, surmised diabetologist A. Panneerselvam. "As a clinician, if 100 patients needed it, I would prescribe it for only 10 patients, because of the cost factor. Now we will recommend it for all patients who will benefit," he said. The expected fall in price however, does not translate into a panacea for the ailment, he cautioned. People must adhere to diet and exercise advice, he pointed out.

What is the drug Empagliflozin?

Empagliflozin, marketed as Jardiance, is a drug for type 2 diabetes mellitus, manufactured by Boehringer Ingelheim, a pharmaceutical company headquartered in Germany. It is used as an adjunct to diet and exercise, to improve glycemic control and reduce the risk of cardiovascular death in patients with established cardiovascular disease, as per its website. The patent for the drug expired on March 11, and reports indicate multiple generics are expected to hit the market, at lower prices. The India diabetes care drugs market was estimated to be worth USD 1.7 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 2.01 billion by 2029. Rajaram Anantharaman, consultant cardiologist with Kauvery Hospital, said research on the drug had revealed



its protective effects for the heart. Studies showed that the drug helped people at risk for heart disease even if they did not have diabetes. "In the past 20 years we had no new major heart medication. These SGLT 2 inhibitors prevent glucose absorption in the kidney. The fluid collection in the lung is therefore reduced, and hospital admission with heart failure comes down. Overall deaths also drop," he explained.

Cardiologists use four different medications for heart failure. They are beta blockers, ARNI inhibitors, mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists and SGLT2 inhibitors. The other three drugs are already available in generic form, Dr. Rajaram said. "We call them the four pillars of heart failure (treatment). With empagliflozin becoming cheaper, the medications will reduce symptoms, deaths and hospitalisations. "We do have a lot of heart failure patients in India. This drug will help in terms of symptoms and improving quality of life," he added. Rajan Ravichandran, senior consultant nephrologist with MIOT, said: "For some unknown reason the drug also protects the kidney. The drug's mechanism reduces protein leak into urine. When sugar is removed along with water, the heart function will improve. Once the tissue oedema goes away the organ functions better. That applies to kidneys also," he explained. The drug was found useful in kidney disease as it helped in weight loss and prevented water retention. "Experience has shown that the drug can be used in kidney patients with or without heart failure or diabetes," Dr. Rajan said, recalling that he had used the drug soon after it was introduced a decade ago. "When I used the drug when it first came out, on a patient, the achievement was remarkable." He has a word of caution: "People who are thin, those with repeated urinary tract infections."

‘His reading of angles is out of the world’: Venkatesh Iyer recounts how MS Dhoni got him out in CSK vs KKR IPL match



GNS News Agency, March 17

Stunned by MS Dhoni's plan to get him out, KKR all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer approached him to understand the tactic during an IPL 2023 match. (BCCI) Stunned by MS Dhoni's plan to get him out, KKR all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer approached him to understand the tactic during an IPL 2023 match. (BCCI) While MS Dhoni may have left his captaincy days behind him, Kolkata Knight Riders all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer described an incident of the Chennai Super Kings talisman's leadership acumen from his last season as the franchise's skipper.

The 30-year-old Iyer, who reunited with KKR during the IPL 2025 mega auction last November with a hefty price tag of Rs 23.75 crore, recounted Dhoni's moment of "real

captaincy" that left him gobsmacked during a CSK-KKR tie in Chennai. After Dhoni made a subtle adjustment in the field during KKR's modest 145-run chase at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, the former India captain prevailed in setting up Iyer's wicket off the very next ball, with Ravindra Jadeja holding onto a catch near the short-third position off Deepak Chahar's bowling.

"Dhoni took out a fielder from deep square leg and placed him at short third, slightly away from the spot where short third usually is. The [very] next ball, I hit straight into short third's hands," Iyer told in an interview with The Cricket Monthly. Intrigued by Dhoni's tactics, Iyer approached him to understand his thoughts following KKR's six-wicket victory. "Post the game I asked Dhoni why he placed that fielder in that spot and he had a proper answer for it. He was trying to understand the impact of the ball from my bat, the angles. His reading of angles is just out of the world, and he knew that if I hit this shot, it had to go in that direction, so he had a fielder put there. This is being proactive. This is real captaincy: understanding what a batter is doing. "That was the cunning of Dhoni. I could have waited for a couple of balls, but no, the next ball, I hit it there (chuckles) and it just happened. The cameras showed the exact picture of how the field changed and the very next ball I hit there. It is up to the batsman to understand why certain things are being done [on the field]," Iyer remarked. Dhoni eventually led CSK to their fifth IPL title that season, beating Gujarat Titans in the final, before relinquishing the leadership role for Ruturaj Gaikwad in the IPL 2024 season.

Teen sensation Andreeva blows away defending champion Swiatek to set up final clash vs Sabalenka



GNS News Agency, March 17

Russian teen sensation Mirra Andreeva blew away defending champion Iga Swiatek 7-6(1), 1-6, 6-3 to reach the Indian Wells final on Saturday where she will meet top seed Aryna Sabalenka, who avenged her Australian Open final loss to Madison Keys with a 6-0, 6-1 drubbing. "Really tough match, tough conditions," said the 17-year-old who is gunning for her second straight WTA 1000 title following her win in Dubai last month.

"I tried to really hang in there. It was not easy, but I'm super happy with the win today and I can't wait to play finals on Sunday," added Andreeva. After a tight first set, Andreeva was flawless in the tiebreak, leaning over and letting out a roar when she enticed a forehand error from Swiatek on set point.

Why white-ball Brearley, Rohit Sharma, is ideal captain for England

GNS News Agency, March 17

Not too long after India had scored the winning runs in the Champions Trophy final in Dubai, Rohit Sharma was assured that he would remain the Test captain for the June-August England tour. It is learnt that the sweaty T-shirts were still to dry and emotions of a second ICC Cup in a matter of months still to sink in, when Rohit got the all-important vote-of-confidence. And thus ended Indian cricket's latest leadership speculation that had peaked during the Border Gavaskar Trophy a month back. It also guaranteed a relatively peaceful IPL without the regular intrigue of the succession drama for those who consider Tests and ODIs to be on par with the franchise T20 cricket.

So when exactly did the decision-makers make up their mind over Rohit's future as Indian captain? Was it when he was dancing down the track hitting the Kiwi bowlers out of the ground like Rohit of old and giving India the flying like he did during the last two ICC events? Or was it when he was being the white-ball Mike Brearley, shuffling his spinners, setting traps, strangling the opposition into submission? That's because India have many opening batting options – Yashasvi Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma, Shubman Gill, Sanju Samson, and KL Rahul to name a few – but not one captaincy candidate who can match Rohit's tactical acumen. He has the patience and nuance – a rare quality among modern-day cricketers – to play the waiting game when chips are down in Tests. In England, captains need to be persistent. They also need to be leaders with strong convictions, who can convince their players to keep pushing even during long fruitless periods.

Contrary to the general perception, England isn't all about swing bowlers having a field day and wickets falling in heaps. It is also the place where batsmen stich long partnerships after they have negotiated the early tricky spell when the ball is dancing around. Daddy Hundreds is a phrase coined in England by their batting legend Graham Gooch. He was the father of Daddy Hundreds during his playing days. When he became England's batting coach, his captain Alastair Cook took the baton and started running those run-marathons. Unfortunately, India has suffered at the hands of both.

There is also another English saying that gives an idea about the cricket narrative across counties. You wait ages for a bus, and then two or more come along at once. Wickets come in bunches – but only if captains are willing to be relentless in their pursuit. They can't switch-off or let the game drift. Even the best in business have failed this tough test. They gave up and paid the price. MS Dhoni, the much celebrated white-ball captain, had often looked clueless in Tests in England. Out of the 9 Tests he led in England, India lost 7.

During the 2011 series, where India lost all the four Tests, a team official confided that Dhoni would catch a nap when the team was batting. On the field too he would sleep-walk as the Test slipped from his hands. Ultra aggression and restlessness too doesn't work in England. Under Kohli India lost 1-4 in 2018. The last team to win in England, 2007, was under Rahul Dravid and little needs to be said about the tenacity of a cricketer called The Wall. That was the team that had the last of India's Test titans –

Sam Billings wants to become England's next white-ball captain

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Sam Billings has played three Tests, 28 one-day internationals and 37 T20s for England. Sam Billings has played three Tests, 28 one-day internationals and 37 T20s for England.

Sam Billings, who has not played for England since 2022, but he wants to become England's next white-ball captain. Sam Billings had led Oval Invincibles to win The Hundred in the past two seasons and won the ILT20 in the UAE with Dubai Capitals in February. "I'd be honoured, you would obviously jump at an opportunity like that. I feel like I can add value," Sam Billings told BBC Sport.

"I've not had a conversation with anyone, but from a leadership point of view I've loved the time over the past few years where I've had some really good success." Billings has played three Tests, 28 one-day internationals and 37 T20s for England. "The talent in domestic cricket in this country is always there, certainly in white-ball cricket," said Billings. "You don't have to reinvent the wheel. It will just be a tweak here or there, picking a really nice, balanced side." It should provide great opportunity for all of us in England. If you're going to stick your hand up and perform well, there are opportunities up for grabs, or there should be, in those formats. As a player, I'm looking at that thinking 'why not, let's try to get back in that side.'

Ben Stokes is tipped as England's next captain in the ODIs with Harry Brook leading the T20s. "I can't speak

The Polish second seed stormed back in the second set, breaking in the first game and levelling the contest when Andreeva's backhand went wide. Andreeva, who was studying handwritten notes during the changeovers, grabbed the momentum back by breaking to open the third set as temperatures in the California desert plummeted and the wind picked up. The loss ends five-time major champion Swiatek's bid to become the first woman to win the tournament in the Southern California desert three times. In the other semi-final, a ruthless Sabalenka needed just 52 minutes to get payback for her loss to Keys in the Melbourne Park final in January. A Keys double fault handed Sabalenka a 4-0 lead in the opener and the Belarusian rolled through the set with ease despite windy conditions. The crowd erupted when Keys won her first game of the match to cut Sabalenka's lead to 5-1 in the second but that would be it for the American, who hit a backhand into the net on match point. "I didn't expect that match to be that fast but I'm super happy," Sabalenka said. "Much needed revenge." Three-time Grand Slam champion Sabalenka, who reached the Indian Wells final in 2023, said she was looking forward to playing the teenager. "It feels like old manna playing against the kid," said 26-year-old Sabalenka. "I'm like what, nine years older than her? She is two years younger than my sister and I look at my sister as a kid. It's crazy." In the men's semi-final, Danish Holger Rune will face Russia's Daniil Medvedev while Spanish superstar Carlos Alcaraz will be up against English Jack Draper on Sunday (March). The women's final will be played on the same day.

Australian Grand Prix, F1: Lando Norris takes pole, leads McLaren 1-2 with Piastri in Melbourne qualifying

GNS News Agency, March 17

McLaren's Lando Norris kept his cool on a sweltering afternoon at Albert Park to take pole position at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix on Saturday as his teammate Oscar Piastri joined him on the front row. Defending champion Max Verstappen will start his Red Bull car third on the grid ahead of fourth-placed Mercedes driver George Russell but it was a disappointing session for Ferrari with Charles Leclerc to start seventh and Lewis Hamilton eighth.

Briton Norris lapped the lakeside circuit in one minute, 15.096 seconds, 0.084 ahead of Melbourne native Piastri, who will hope to become Australia's first home winner since the race joined F1's global calendar in 1985. "It's the perfect way to start the year," said Norris. "I'm never going to get ahead of myself, I'm not that kind of guy. I'm confident the car is in a great position but we've also never run in the wet," he added. Rain forecast for Sunday could make the race a lottery but McLaren were delighted with their raw pace in the dry. Verstappen, bidding for a fifth consecutive drivers' title, had struggled with handling problems through free practice so he was also glad to be near the front for Sunday. "For me dry or wet is fine, in the weather there is always some crazy things that can happen and especially around here it can be quite slippery." Racing Bulls were buoyed to have a car fifth on the grid as Yuki Tsunoda drove like a man with a point to prove after missing out on a Red Bull seat to New Zealander Liam Lawson. Williams also landed a blow in the mid-field battle, with Alex Albon sixth, four places better than teammate Carlos Sainz. Ferrari's underwhelming pace was a surprise to their rivals and to Hamilton, whose quickest lap in the final qualifying session (Q3) was nearly nine-tenths of a second slower than



Norris's. "I didn't know we'd be nine-tenths off or eight-tenths off today but there is a lot to dissect, for sure," Hamilton said. "Tomorrow's going to be a challenge, I've never driven this car in the rain. I don't even know the rain settings so I've got to go and study that tonight." Pierre Gasly was ninth for Alpine, comfortably out-qualifying his new teammate Jack Doohan (14). Racing Bulls rookie Isack Hadjar was 11th, the best of the six drivers in Australia starting a Formula One season for the first time. It was a mixed bag for the others, with Sauber's Gabriel Bortoleto 15th after scraping into the second session of qualifying. Having triggered two red flags in two days of practice, Haas rookie Oliver Bearman suffered a gearbox problem in his out-lap and had to return to the garage, unable to post a time. Lawson's Red Bull debut was forgettable, having been knocked out of Q1 after sitting out the final practice earlier in the day due to a power unit problem. Mercedes' Andrea Kimi Antonelli also missed Q2, knocked out of the top 15 by a last-ditch lap from Bortoleto.

0/2 in Super Over: Bahrain record first T20I instance with no runs in tied game against Hong Kong



GNS News Agency, March 17

For the first time in 16 years since the Super Over was first used as a tie-breaker in a T20I match, Bahrain bore the ignominy of not scoring a single run in the one-over shootout during a clash against Hong Kong in Kuala Lumpur on Friday. In a match that went down to the wire to set a rare piece of T20I history during the Malaysia Tri-Nation series, Hong Kong crawled to 129 for seven batting first after winning the toss. In their reply, Bahrain got off to a quick start with openers Fiaz Ahmed and Prashant Kurup

racing to 30 within the first four overs. However, Hong Kong stubbed the scoring rate with regular wickets, leaving Bahrain five down for 67.

Skipper Ahmer bin Nasir then led a late recovery that put his side within 13 runs of victory in the last over. Nasir levelled the scores with a six off medium pacer Nasrulla Rana on the penultimate ball before being caught by his counterpart Zeeshan Ali behind the stumps off the final delivery, ending the game in a tie. Returning for the Super Over, Nasir could not open the scoring again as Hong Kong's veteran off-spinner Ehsan Khan removed him and Sohail Ahmed from successive deliveries. As per ICC's T20I playing conditions the 'Super Over Procedure' states: "The loss of two wickets shall end the batting team's one over innings." Hong Kong then romped to victory off the third ball in the Super Over with Babar Hayat hitting the winning runs. The tie was the 33rd men's T20I match to be decided by a Super Over. Interestingly, it was the first time Bahrain finished on the losing side of a Super Over after having succeeded twice before. Bahrain holds the joint-record of featuring in most T20I Super Overs among Associate Nations, alongside Qatar, United States and Kuwait.

Varun Chakaravarty: 'I'm interested in Test cricket but my bowling style doesn't suit long-form game'

GNS News Agency, March 17

India's mystery spinner and star performer at the Champions Trophy 2025, Varun Chakaravarty expressed his interest in the longest format of the game – Test cricket – while also describing his limitations to playing in the red ball. Varun led India to their first 50-over ICC title in 12 years after the Men In Blue beat New Zealand by four wickets in the final of the ICC Champions Trophy in Dubai, earlier this month.

"I do (have an interest in Test cricket), but my bowling style doesn't suit Test cricket," while speaking in a podcast with Gopinath on his YouTube channel, Varun said. "Mine is almost like medium pace. In Test cricket, you've to continuously bowl 20-30 overs. I can't do that in my bowling. Since I bowl quick, the maximum I can bowl is 10-15 overs which is not suited for red ball. I am focusing on 20 overs and 50 overs white ball cricket for now," he added. The 33-year-old was wrecker-in-chief against New Zealand during the group stage match and picked a five-wicket haul, helping India dismantle a strong Kiwi side. He picked nine wickets in just three games and was the joint second-highest



wicket-taker in the tournament just behind New Zealand's Matt Henry. The Tamil Nadu spinner also said that he has no regrets leaving pace bowling for spin. Varun started his cricketing career as a wicket-keeper, then during his college days, he was a fast bowler but an injury-induced decision of taking up spin bowling led him to play for India. On being asked whether he has any regrets about leaving pace bowling, Varun said: "No. That's why I am here. I would've been stuck there had I bowled pace."

'Zoya Akhtar was unprofessional, didn't inform me that I'd been replaced by Parmeet Sethi in Dil Dhadhakne Do': Adi Irani



Adi Irani is best known for his role as Vicky Malhotra in the 1993 film Baazigar, starring Shah Rukh Khan. The actor has played several memorable character roles in his career. He recently shared his woeful tales about the industry in an interview with Filmymantra Media. Irani said that he was supposed to do a role in the star-studded film Dil Dhadhakne Do, but later found out that Parmeet Sethi had been cast in the role instead. He claimed that director Zoya Akhtar likes working with her friends, and said that she conducted an audition with him before deciding to go with Parmeet. Dil Dhadhakne Do, starring Anil Kapoor, Priyanka Chopra, Ranveer Singh, Farhan Akhtar, and Shefali Shah, was released in 2015. He said that he was adamant about playing a character with more meaty scenes than the one he'd been asked to audition for. "I explained to Zoya that I don't want my character to be seen throughout the film; the quantity of the scenes can be less, but there needs to be quality," he said.

The actor said that while he was filming Welcome Back, Zoya hired Parmeet Sethi for the role, but he was not informed of this change. He said that during Welcome Back, Anil Kapoor even confirmed with him if he'd finalised the deal for Dil Dhadhakne Do. "I mentioned that I wanted a more 'meaty' role, and Zoya told me that she would call me if that was not going to get that part," he said. Irani added that when he was called for a second audition, he was given the lines for a different character, and he realised that he was not going to get the part that he initially auditioned for. "I was not informed about it," he said. Asked if he was left to speculate, Irani said yes. "It wasn't very professional of her, but who knows what she was thinking. It's very difficult to inform an actor that they've been axed. Everybody wants to be a diplomat in the industry, and people are not very frank and open; that is what I feel," said the Welcome actor. Irani also mentioned that directors and producers are currently only making films to earn money and that the stories no longer have an 'emotional touch' to them.

Yoo Yeon Seok hit with \$5.3 million tax evasion inquiry, new K-drama slammed; agency responds



penalised by the Korean National Tax Service over allegations of tax evasion. penalised by the Korean National Tax Service over allegations of tax evasion. When the Phone Rings actor Yoo Yeon Seok is now under the scanner for allegedly evading taxes. According to Nocut News, the Hospital Playlist star was recently penalised by the Korean National Tax Service over allegations of tax evasion. Yoo Yeon Seok's agency, King Kong by Starship, has since responded to the report. Amid these allegations, Yoo Yeon Seok's upcoming SBS drama is facing growing public backlash. The timing couldn't be worse, with public sentiment already sour following the ongoing dating scandal involving Kim Soo Hyun and late actor Kim Sae Ron.

On March 14, Nocut News reported that Yoo Yeon Seok's agency, Forever Entertainment, was recently hit with a hefty tax audit. Following the investigation, the National Tax Service (NTS) reportedly slapped him with a 7 billion KRW (\$5.3 million) bill, which also includes unpaid income taxes. Reports also claim the NTS found additional issues tied to Yoo Yeon Seok's one-man entertainment company, where he serves as CEO, particularly around payment-related matters during its setup. If confirmed, this would rank as one of the largest penalties ever imposed on a Korean celebrity.

In response, his current agency, King Kong by Starship, issued a statement clarifying that the Dr Romantic star has already filed for a review of the decision, and is waiting for an official response from the NTS. Yoo Yeon Seok, who shot to global fame in 2024 after starring in one of Netflix's biggest K-drama hits, is now pushing back on the allegations. King Kong by Starship explained that the additional tax bill likely comes from a "difference in calculation."

"This issue arose due to differences in the interpretation and application of tax laws between the tax agent and the tax authorities," the agency said in a statement (via Allkpop). "Currently, we are at the stage of awaiting notification from the authorities following a pre-tax review." They added, "Yoo Yeon Seok has always prioritized fulfilling his tax obligations diligently and will continue to comply with relevant laws and procedures as a responsible citizen."

Years before they tied the knot, Alia Bhatt told Ranbir Kapoor what kind of man she'd never marry: 'I've never been in love'

Both Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor had breakthrough roles in films directed by Imtiaz Ali. While Ranbir starred in the musical drama Rockstar, Alia proved her worth in the film Highway. She was only one movie old at the time, and many in the industry hadn't taken her seriously after Student of the Year, her debut film, directed by Karan Johar. In a promotional interaction with her director Imtiaz Ali and Ranbir, Alia discussed what love means to her, and revealed what kind of man she'd never consider marrying. Alia, who turned 32 on Saturday, tied the knot with Ranbir around a decade after this interaction. During the chat, Imtiaz appeared to come up with the premise of a movie



for the two of them, a movie about a man with a mysterious past and a vibrant girl. "It's like this guy isn't used to being good to people, and this girl demands that people are good," he said, leaving them both impressed.

Turning to Alia, Ranbir asked, "What's your take on love? Right now, you're one

of those girls who's like, 'My career is the most important'..." Alia interrupted him, and said that she has never made this claim. "I've never been in love before," she said. Ranbir continued, "Would you get married to somebody who didn't want you to act?" Alia didn't take a second to reply, "No." She

explained, "I probably won't act all my life, but I want to act for as long as I want. And if someone doesn't want that for me, then you don't want me. You want somebody else, and that person isn't here, sorry." Alia and Ranbir tied the knot in 2022, and welcomed their daughter, Raha, later that same year. They worked together for the first time in Ayan Mukerji's Brahmastra. Ranbir said at a press interaction this week that Ayan will begin working on the sequel after fulfilling his commitments to War 2, starring Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR. Ranbir was last seen in Animal, while Alia last starred in Jigra. They are currently filming Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love and War, also starring Vicky Kaushal.

'Shah Rukh Khan was driving, Ranveer Singh was in the dikki,' Mika recalls Hrithik Roshan's birthday party: 'He wanted us to go in his Rolls-Royce'

Shah Rukh Khan and Mika might not have had shared many hit Bollywood songs, but the two share a great friendship. In a recent interview, Mika said that he once gave his luxury car to King Khan so that he could leave a crowded location. The singer recalled that he has fond memories of the car, as SRK once drove it after Hrithik Roshan's birthday party. He shared that since there was no space for the driver, Shah Rukh took over driving duties, and Ranveer Singh sat in the trunk. Talking to Pinkvilla, Mika said that Shah Rukh kept his Hummer for three months afterwards. He then recalled a story about Hrithik's birthday party. "He wanted that all of us should go on a ride in his Rolls-Royce. It was 5 in the morning. I said we will only sit in the car that can accommodate all of us," he recalled and added, "We went and we immediately realised that we couldn't all fit in Hrithik's car."

At this time, they decided to go for a ride in the Hummer. "I said if there is a driver along with us, we won't be able to sit. Shah Rukh asked, 'Who will drive?' I said, 'You'. He asked again, 'I will drive?' I said, 'We will only fit if you drive'. He is such a sweet guy. He took the Hummer's keys (and drove). I still have that Hummer because he touched that car," he recalled. Mika said that Shah Rukh, Gauri Khan, Sanjay Kapoor, Maheep Kapoor, Hrithik and him were all in the car when Ranveer Singh came running out and asked where he could squeeze in. "I said you sit in the trunk. I have that video but I will never share it with anyone. All of



us went to Shah Rukh's house and we partied there till 7-8 am. I have a selfie from that morning," he said. In the same chat, Mika praised SRK and shared, "He is one of the best actors and a gentlemen. I always wear this ring (points to his finger), which is worth Rs 50 lakh. I have gifted similar rings to Amitabh Bachchan and Gurdas Maan too, but the first person I gave one to was SRK. I wanted to do something for the three of them. But I had nothing else to offer them, so I gifted them rings. My ring might not have even mattered to him since he could own rings worth Rs 50 crore or more. But he is very sweet and thanked me for the gift."

Priyanka Chopra's brother Siddharth was 'overshadowed' by her during his childhood, says mom Madhu: 'Mine and his father's influence wasn't much'



In a recent chat with Lehren Retro, Madhu spoke about Siddharth's childhood as he grew up under the shadow of his successful sister. "Sometimes, I feel that, but he turned out all right. He landed on his feet

Priyanka Chopra was on her way to becoming a global star when she won Miss World in the year 2000. After this, she moved to Mumbai to start her film career and her mother, Dr Madhu Chopra, moved with her as Priyanka tried to find her way in the film industry. But while Priyanka's parents were supporting her through her film journey, her younger brother, Siddharth, grew up with his grandparents and was "overshadowed" by his sister's success. In a recent chat with Lehren Retro, Madhu spoke about Siddharth's childhood as he grew up under the shadow of his successful sister. "Sometimes, I feel that, but he turned out all right. He landed on his feet. He is quite an independent, free thinking person. He is very different personality. With him, it was that without any internal influences... I mean family can become clawing sometimes, he grew up without that influence and he just grew up. He grew up with both his grandmothers," she said.

Madhu shared that he is a "very responsible child" but added, "But many times I feel that during his growing up years, when he was a teenager, his father's influence wasn't much, my influence also wasn't much, the grandmothers were the primary caretakers. He had a very pampered life." She recalled that Priyanka would take

Siddharth along to her shoots, or whenever she was going out for her shows. Talking about being overshadowed, Madhu said that all of them were overshadowed by Priyanka. "Even a blade of grass won't grow behind a big banyan tree," she said. Siddharth recently got married to Neelam Upadhyaya. The wedding was attended by Priyanka.

In the same chat, Madhu recalled when Priyanka moved to the US for the first time at the age of 13 and started studying there. "My sister said that education is better in the US but that's not true at all. Education is so much better in India but the environment was better there for overall well-rounded development," she said. Madhu's sister was living in the US and was ready to be Priyanka's guardian for the time she studied there. But, amid all this, Priyanka's father Ashok Chopra wasn't in favour of Priyanka moving abroad and live without her parents.

"Papa said, see, she is a teenager, this is not the right age for her to live there. She should be with her parents at this time. I said that is not something we should worry about. She will live with my sister, and she is strict, she will do a good job," she recalled. Priyanka lived in the US for three years and in this time, she did not live with her parents. Her mother visited her next when she was 16 after Priyanka

'Salman Khan threw me at a glass wall, my face was slashed; he left without apologising,' recalls Chori Chori Chupke Chupke co-star



Salman Khan is known for being an impulsive man who follows his heart, but in a recent interview, his Chori Chori Chupke Chupke co-star Adi Irani recalled that Salman once threw him at a glass wall, and left without apologising after he started bleeding. Adi recalled that a day after the accident happened, Salman called him to his room and apologised because he was feeling guilty.

Adi shared with Filmymantra Media, "While doing Chori Chori Chupke Chupke, he threw me at a glass frame. Glass pieces were stuck in my face, there was blood all over me. It was terrible." Adi was playing the role of Salman's friend in the film. He is best remembered for playing Vicky Malhotra in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer Baazigar. Adi said that he was severely injured, and if he had refused to shoot at that point, it would have resulted in losses for the producer. "I supported the producer and asked for a doctor who could give me a painkiller or an injection, and I suggested that we put a white tape on my wound after stopping the bleeding, and put some make up on that so it matches the skin colour," he said, and added, "I said, 'You do it for one shot. Then take a shot where my head hits a vase and after that, if my head bleeds in the rest of the scene, it will look like it has gotten hit in the scene'. Producer was very happy and we continued."

When asked how Salman reacted to this accident, Adi said that he just went to his room. "After I got hit, he left the set. He went and sat in his room," he said, and when asked if Salman offered an apology, Adi said, "No sorry. Nothing." Preity Zinta, who was also on set that day, immediately rushed to him out of concern. Adi said that he completed the sequence in this state and the next day, Salman called him to his room. "The next day, Salman called me and he said 'Adi, I am really sorry. I am feeling so bad. I couldn't even look in your eyes. I was feeling so bad.' I said 'Salman, it's okay, it happens'. He spoke very nicely to me. He felt very bad. There are some people who can apologise immediately. Some people can't say sorry but they are feeling sorry so he is one of those who cannot say sorry," he said.

'Amitabh Bachchan accepted a Rs 50 lakh ring from me, but Shah Rukh Khan gave it back': Mika hails Big B's magnanimity

Singer Mika Singh has a new tale to tell for each day of the week, and this time around, his story includes Shah Rukh Khan and Amitabh Bachchan. In an interview with Pinkvilla, Mika recalled several interactions with the two stars. "I gifted a Rs 50 lakh ring to Shah Rukh Khan, Gurdas Maan, and Amitabh Bachchan. I just wanted to do something for these three people," he said.

Mika shared how Shah Rukh Khan tried to return the ring, calling it too expensive a gift, but he refused to take it back. "From that point on we started interacting a bit, and he even came to a shoot I was doing with Himesh Reshammiya," the singer added. Mika shared how grateful he feels for getting being able to interact with Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, and Amitabh Bachchan. He shared how the Deewaar actor accepted his invitation to visit the set of one of his films. "We always talk in Punjabi, and he is the first one to wish me on my birthday," said Mika, while praising the demeanor and behaviour of Amitabh. "These kinds of people don't just capture a time period; they capture people and their hearts. No matter how big you become, you will still continue to talk about them," said Mika.

Aamir Khan reveals what he and Shah Rukh Khan gossiped about

Mumbai: In a candid and humorous moment, actor Aamir Khan shared a delightful tidbit about his conversation with Shah Rukh Khan. When asked if they discussed each other's birthdays, Aamir revealed that the two stars didn't talk about anything remotely related to birthdays at all. Instead, they were focused on something much more amusing. Speaking to the media on the eve of his 60th birthday, the 'PK' actor humouredly said,

No, actually we didn't talk about our birthdays at all. No, we did not think we forgot; no we did not even talk about birthday. We were talking randomly about other things. We were gossiping about you all for a change."

On March 12, Aamir Khan had a candid conversation with the media in Mumbai on Thursday, sharing insights about his films and personal life. However, the most attention-grabbing moment came when Aamir mentioned a potential film featuring him alongside the other two Khans, Shah Rukh and Salman Khan.