

INDIAN CHRONICLE

SSC Public Examinations set to commence on Friday

Hyderabad: The SSC Public Examinations are all set to commence from Friday. A total of 5,09,403 students, including 2,58,895 boys and 2,50,508 girls, registered for the examinations, which will be conducted at 2,650 centres set up across the State. As many as 28,100 invigilators and 2,650 chief superintendents and departmental officers are deputed for examination duties.— Examinations will be conducted from March 21 to April 4 Exam timings except for first language composite and science subjects: 9.30 am to 12.30 pm First language composite timing: 9.30 am to 12.50 pm Physical and biological science timing: 9.30 am to 11 am on two separate days

Organs of 54-year-old brain-dead man donated under Jeevandan

Hyderabad: Family members of a 54-year-old carpenter Beijenki Sadanandam, a resident of Indira Nagar, Shamshiguda, Kukatpally, who was declared as brain dead by attending doctors, have agree to donate organs under Jeevandan organ donation drive. The carpenter had suddenly collapsed at his home after complaining of giddiness. He was shifted to a hospital where the attending doctors declared him as brain dead on Wednesday. The wife of the carpenter, Beijenki Vijaya made the decision to donate the organs of her brain dead husband. The donor liver and two kidneys (three organs in all) were donated to three needy patients under Jeevandan initiative.

Observe 'Earth Hour' on March 22: Governor Abdul Nazeer



Vijayawada, March 20 (NSS): Andhra Pradesh Governor S. Abdul Nazeer has given the call to people of the State to observe 'Earth Hour' on March 22, by switching off all non-essential lights from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm as part of the WWF's (World Wide Fund for Nature) Earth Hour global movement, originated in 2007. Governor Abdul Nazeer has said the WWF's Earth Hour campaign unites people around the world through the voluntary action of switching off non-essential lights for one hour, to help bring conservation and sustainable practices into focus, creating a better world for future generations. (NSS)

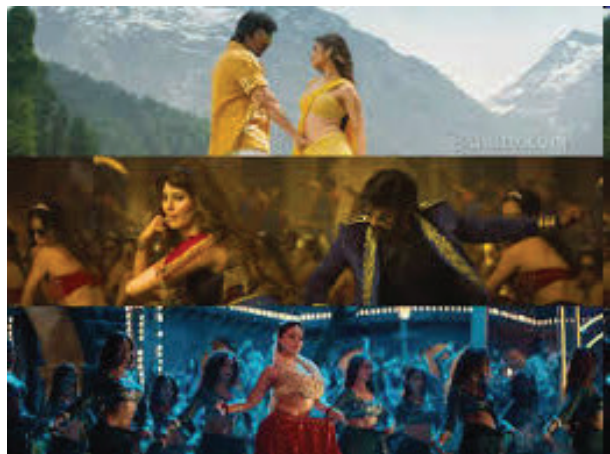
HC quashes FIR against Harish Rao in phone tapping case



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): Former minister and Siddipet MLA Harish Rao got relief in the phone-tapping case that created a sensation in State politics. The Telangana High Court today quashed the phone-tapping case registered against him at the Punjagutta police station.

Based on the complaint filed by real estate businessman Chakradhar Goud that his phone was tapped, the Punjagutta police registered an FIR against Harish Rao and former DCP of the Task Force Radhakishan Rao. Following this, Harish Rao filed a quash petition in the High Court to dismiss the case registered against him. The court had earlier given an interim order not to arrest Harish Rao as part of the investigation. As the arguments of both sides on this petition have been concluded, the High Court has issued an order quashing the FIR filed against Harish Rao in the phone-tapping case. (NSS)

Telangana Women's Commission issues strict warning to film choreographers



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): In response to multiple complaints regarding the inappropriate and degrading dance steps featured in certain movie songs, the Telangana State Women's Commission has taken a firm stance on the matter, warning choreographers that stringent measures will be implemented if there is no change in their conduct.

In a press release issued on Thursday, Nerella Sharada, Chairperson of the Telangana State Commission for Women, emphasized the immediate cessation of indecent dance routines that undermine women's dignity. She stated, "Should this warning be disregarded, we are prepared to enforce strict actions in accordance with applicable laws." Sharada further highlighted the film industry's ethical obligation to convey positive messages to society and uphold women's dignity. She urged the industry to practice self-regulation, considering the influence films have on youth and children. Chairperson Nerella Sharada also mentioned that individuals and social organisations have the opportunity to share their opinions on the matter with the Women's Commission, which will keep a close watch on all developments and take appropriate action. (NSS)

Job fair held at Ravindra Bharathi; CM Revanth Reddy distributes appointment letters

CM Revanth Reddy distributes appointment letters Highlights A large-scale job fair was held at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad, where appointment letters were handed over to 922 selected candidates in the Panchayati Raj Department. Hyderabad : A large-scale job fair was held at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad, where appointment letters were handed over to 922 selected candidates in the Panchayati Raj Department. Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, along with Congress leaders, including Seethakka, attended the event. The recruitment drive marks a significant step in the state government's efforts to strengthen the Panchayati Raj system by filling crucial vacancies. Addressing the gathering, CM Revanth Reddy reaffirmed his commitment to providing employment opportunities and enhancing governance at the grassroots level.



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Chiranjeevi receives UK's Lifetime Achievement Award, says, it motivates me to work with greater vigor

GNS News Agency, March 20

Mumbai: Megastar Chiranjeevi expressed his gratitude and enthusiasm upon receiving the UK's Lifetime Achievement Award, stating that the recognition motivates him to continue his work with even greater vigor. The actor took to his Instagram handle to pen a heartfelt note that read, "Heart filled with gratitude for the honour at the House of Commons – UK Parliament by so many Esteemed Members of Parliament, Ministers & Under Secretaries, Diplomats. Humbled by their kind words. Heartened by the Life Time Achievement Award by Team Bridge India."*

Chiranjeevi added, "Words are not enough. But a heartfelt Thank You to each one of my wonderful loving fans, blood brothers, blood sisters, my film family well wishers, friends and all my family members and everyone who in every which way contributed to my journey and participated in the humanitarian causes I have been championing. This honor motivates me to continue my work with greater vigor. And Love to each one of you for your beautiful congratulatory messages."* Alongside it, he also shared his images of receiving the prestigious award. Notably, Chiranjeevi made history as the first Indian celebrity to receive the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the British government.

The award was presented to him at a special ceremony held at the UK Parliament in London on March 19. Chiranjeevi's brother, Pawan Kalyan, the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, extended his heartfelt congratulations on this remarkable accomplishment. Pawan shared pictures of Chiranjeevi from the felicitation ceremony on his social media and expressed his immense pride in being the younger brother of the iconic Waltair Veerayya actor. He wrote, "I consider Chiranjeevi garu more like a father than an elder brother. He is the person who showed me the way when I was confused and did not know what to do in life. My elder brother Chiranjeevi garu is the hero of my life." The event, which took place at the House of Commons, was graced by notable dignitaries, including Members of Parliament from the ruling Labour Party, such as Navendu Mishra (Stockport), Sojan Joseph, and Bob Blackman.

Elon Musk's X sues union government over alleged censorship and IT Act violations



GNS News Agency, March 20

Social media giant 'X' (formerly Twitter), owned by U.S. billionaire Elon Musk, on Thursday (March 20, 2025) filed a lawsuit in the Karnataka High Court against the Government of India, challenging what it called unlawful content regulation and arbitrary censorship. It raised concerns over the Centre's interpretation of the Information Technology (IT) Act, particularly its use of Section 79(3)(b), which 'X' argues violates Supreme Court rulings and undermines free expression online. The lawsuit alleged the government is using the said section to create a parallel content-blocking mechanism, bypassing the structured legal process outlined in Section 69A.

'X' claimed this approach contradicts the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in the Shreya Singhal case, which established that content can only be blocked through a proper judicial process or the legally defined route under Section 69A. According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), Section 79(3)(b) mandates online platforms to remove illegal content when directed by either a court order or a government notification. If a platform fails to comply within 36 hours, it risks losing its safe harbor protection under Section 79(1) and could be held accountable under various laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC). However, X has contested this interpretation, arguing that the provision does not grant the government independent authority to block content. Instead, it accused authorities of misusing the law to impose arbitrary censorship without following due process.

Under Section 69A of the IT Act, the government has the power to block public access to digital content if it is deemed a threat to national security, sovereignty, or public order. However, this process is regulated by the 2009 Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, which require a structured review process before blocking decisions are made. 'X' has argued that instead of following these procedures, the government is using Section 79(3)(b) as a shortcut, allowing content to be removed without the necessary scrutiny. The platform sees this as a direct violation of legal safeguards meant to prevent arbitrary censorship. Another major point in the social media platform's legal challenge is its opposition to the government's Sahyog portal. Created by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the Ministry of Home Affairs, this platform was designed to streamline takedown requests under Section 79(3)(b) and facilitate direct communication between social media platforms and law enforcement agencies. Twitter, the IT Act, and the blocking saga explained | In Focus Podcast However, 'X' has refused to onboard an employee onto the Sahyog portal, claiming it acts as a "censorship tool" that pressures platforms to remove content without proper legal review. The lawsuit argues that this is yet another attempt by the government to control online discourse without judicial oversight.



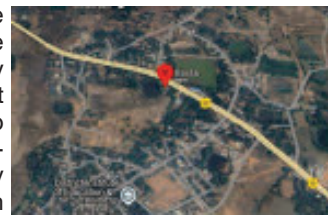
Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): This is to inform the public and all concerned parties that Vijay Deverakonda had officially entered into a contract with a company solely for the limited purpose of serving as a brand ambassador for skill-based games. His endorsement was strictly confined to regions and territories where online skill-based games are legally permitted. It is important to clarify that skill-based games, including online games such as rummy, have been repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court of India as distinct from gambling or gaming. The court has upheld that such games involve skill rather than chance, making them legally permissible. Vijay Deverakonda's legal team and agencies carefully review all associations before entering into any agreements. After a thorough legal review, he had agreed to endorse the skill-based gaming platform A23, ensuring that his association aligned with the law standards. However, his endorsement term ended in 2023, and he is no longer associated with the brand. This press release is being issued to eliminate any misconceptions/ misinformation and to emphasize that Vijay Deverakonda's past endorsement of a legally recognized skill-based gaming company was completely lawful, stated PR Team Vijay Deverakonda. (NSS)

Twenty two Maoists killed in twin Bastar encounters

GNS News Agency, March 20

This image made out of Google Maps locates Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. This image made out of Google Maps locates Bastar region of Chhattisgarh.

At least 22 Maoists and a security personnel were killed in two separate anti-Maoist operations in the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh on Thursday (March 20, 2025). Of these, 18 were gunned down in a major encounter along the Bijapur-Dantewada border in South Bastar, said a senior police officer. In this operation, a member of the Bijapur District Reserve Guard (DRG), a locally raised force to combat Maoism, was also killed. According to the police, a joint team of security personnel had gone out on an (anti-Naxal operation) ANO in the Gangaloor police station area. Around 7 a.m., an exchange of fire began and continued till the afternoon. Once the firing stopped, bodies of 18 Naxalites, along with a large quantity of arms and ammunition, were recovered from the encounter site, the officer added. Encounter on along Kanker-Narayanpur border In the second encounter, reported along the Kanker-Narayanpur border of North Bastar, the exchange of fire is currently on between the joint police party of DRG and Border Security Force (BSF) and the Maoists. The police issued a bulletin around 1.30 p.m. that bodies of four Maoists have been recovered.



Vijay Deverakonda clarifies

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): This is to inform the public and all concerned parties that Vijay Deverakonda had officially entered into a contract with a company solely for the limited purpose of serving as a brand ambassador for skill-based games. His endorsement was strictly confined to regions and territories where online skill-based games are legally permitted. It is important to clarify that skill-based games, including online games such as rummy, have been repeatedly recognized by the Supreme Court of India as distinct from gambling or gaming. The court has upheld that such games involve skill rather than chance, making them legally permissible. Vijay Deverakonda's legal team and agencies carefully review all associations before entering into any agreements. After a thorough legal review, he had agreed to endorse the skill-based gaming platform A23, ensuring that his association aligned with the law standards. However, his endorsement term ended in 2023, and he is no longer associated with the brand. This press release is being issued to eliminate any misconceptions/ misinformation and to emphasize that Vijay Deverakonda's past endorsement of a legally recognized skill-based gaming company was completely lawful, stated PR Team Vijay Deverakonda. (NSS)

SCR bags first prize of Rajbhasha Shield



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): It is a moment of great pride for South Central Railway (SCR) as the Rajbhasha Department of SCR Headquarters has bagged the first prize of Railway Minister Rajbhasha Shield for the best performance in the field of implementation of Rajbhasha.

Meanwhile, Vijayawada Division bagged the Acharya Raghuvveer Chal Vijayanti as Model Division and Wagon Workshop, Guntupalli received the Railway Minister Rajbhasha Shield as model workshop. Rajesh P. Khade, Mukhya Rajbhasha Adikari & Principal Chief Materials Manager (PCMM), SCR received the Railway Minister Rajbhasha Silver Medal. These shields were presented by Satish Kumar, Chairman & CEO, Railway Board, at a function organized at New Delhi on Thursday in the presence of Executive Director & Sr. Railway Board officials.

The Railway Minister Rajbhasha Shield for Headquarters office was received by Rajesh P. Khade, Mukhya Rajbhasha Adikari & Principal Chief Materials Manager, SCR; Dr Shyam Sundar Sahu, DGM (OL) and M.K. Nagaraju, RBA/Hqrs.

The Acharya Raghuvveer Chal Vijayanti for Vijayawada Division was received by Narendra A. Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division and M.K. Nagaraju, RBA. The Railway Minister Rajbhasha Shield for Wagon Workshop, Guntupalli was received by S. Srinivas, Chief Workshop Manager, Guntupalli.

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR, congratulated the Rajbhasha team on receiving the honour at All India Level. He appreciated the performance of the Headquarters, Division and Workshop in implementation of Rajbhasha. He also congratulated Rajesh P. Khade, PCMM on receiving the Railway Minister Rajbhasha Silver Medal. He advised the team to keep up good work to achieve more laurels. (NSS)

French short film festival on March 23

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): In celebration of Francophonie Month, Alliance Française Hyderabad will present La Fête du Court Métrage, an exciting French short film festival showcasing an exceptional collection of French short films. This annual event will take place on March 23, 2025, from 5 pm to 8 pm at the Alliance Française Hyderabad Auditorium. (NSS)



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Putin's tactical pause

Though a welcome step towards de-escalation, Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to halt attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure for 30 days is far from being the breakthrough for lasting peace. While President Donald Trump promotes this partial truce as progress, the reality is more complex. By refusing a full ceasefire and demanding an end to western military aid to Ukraine, Putin is setting terms that serve only Moscow's interests. The ceasefire focusses solely on energy infrastructure, and even that commitment appears shaky. Mere hours after Putin's call with Trump, Russian drones struck Ukrainian cities, including a hospital in Sumy. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, though supporting the limited truce, remains cautious. His concerns are valid. The White House's handling of negotiations raises red flags. The upcoming peace talks in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, lack clarity on Ukraine's direct participation. Trump's claim that military aid to Ukraine was "not discussed" contradicts the Kremlin's assertion that it is central to Russia's demands. European leaders, including Germany's Olaf Scholz and France's Emmanuel Macron, remain wary. They rightly emphasise that Ukraine must be fully involved in any settlement. A deal that legitimises Russian territorial gains or weakens Ukraine's military standing would only prolong the conflict and embolden future aggression. Yet, dismissing talks entirely would be a mistake. This brutal war has stretched into its third year, leaving hundreds of thousands dead, displacing millions and devastating cities. A lasting peace must be the ultimate goal — not just a fragile truce that prolongs suffering. Diplomacy must aim beyond temporary ceasefires to secure Ukraine's sovereignty and regional stability. Peace must emerge from negotiations that uphold international law. Without a firm commitment to a just resolution, the war will continue at immense human and economic cost.

Hyderabad to host 72nd Miss World, showcasing Telangana's cultural grandeur



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): The city of Hyderabad is gearing up to host the 72nd Miss World Competition from May 7 to 31, 2025, a prestigious global event that is expected to highlight Telangana's rich culture and tourism potential. The State government has made extensive preparations to ensure the event's success, viewing it as a significant opportunity to boost international recognition and economic growth. Ahead of the grand event, a pre-event press conference was held at Greenland's Tourism Plaza, attended by key dignitaries, including Miss World 2024 Krystyna Pyszková, Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, TGDC Chairman Patel Ramesh Reddy, Tourism Principi Secretary Smita Sabharwal, and Miss World Limited CEO Julia Morley. Expressing her excitement, Miss World Ms. Krystyna Pyszková praised India's rich cultural heritage and shared her enthusiasm for being part of an event that celebrates diversity, talent, and empowerment. Minister Jupally Krishna Rao underscored the significance of hosting the global pageant in Telangana, calling it a "historic moment" for the state. The Minister said the event is costing a total of Rs. 54 crore, with Rs. 27 crore being allocated by the Tourism Corporation. Moreover, the Corporation is seeking to generate more funds through additional sponsorships, he said. "The Miss World competition is more than just a beauty pageant; it symbolises women's empowerment and 'beauty with a purpose.' Women play a vital role in shaping society, and this event aligns with our vision of promoting inclusivity and diversity," Jupally stated. Drawing comparisons with South Korea's global cultural success through Squid Game and BTS, the Minister emphasised that the Miss World pageant could position Telangana on the international stage. "This event will not only enhance our cultural identity but also attract global investments and employment opportunities for the youth. With over 140 contestants from various countries and thousands of international visitors, we anticipate a significant boost to the tourism sector, generating substantial revenue for the state," he added. Amid debates over the relevance of beauty pageants in modern times, the minister urged critics to recognise the competition as a platform for women's empowerment rather than viewing it through a political lens. With Hyderabad preparing to welcome participants and audiences from around the world, the 72nd Miss World Competition is set to be a landmark event, further strengthening Telangana's reputation as a global tourism and cultural hub. This prestigious event is covered by 3,000 global media partners. (NSS)

Timmaiah gari subash reddy donated self land to Mahatma Jyotiba Phule hostel students class rooms



Indian chronicle, March 19. "Timmaiah gari subash reddy one of the famous personality in the Medak district his donated self land in the centre of bibipet Mahatma Jyotiba Phule hostel students classroom purpose, Subhash Shetty also conducted lot of poor people welfare programs, hand is dieting lot of amount to the Government schools, and poor people education purpose, to day his participated bhoomi pooja ceremony in the bibipet, Rco, hostel principal, and teachers politicians, students congratulated to the great human being personality timmaiah gari subash reddy.

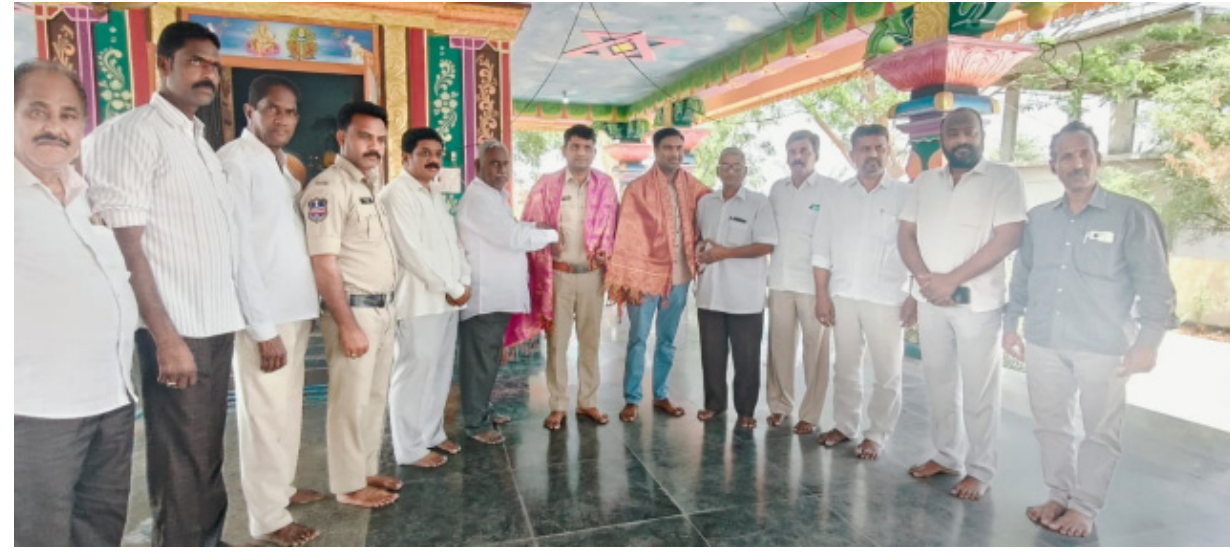
Under the auspices of the Congress party, the portrayal of the CM.



The aim of the Congress party is the development of social justice and the weaker sections. Koyada Srinivas Parakala Urban Congress Party Presidents Parakala, March 19, Indian Chronicle: "State Government in Parakala constituency, under the auspices of the Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, under the auspices of the town and Mandala Congress party, on Wednesday, on the occasion of the BC Caste Classification and SC caste classification bills. The Palabhishekam program was organized. Under the direction of Parakala Legislators Revuri Prakash Reddy, Urban Congress Party President Koyada Srinivas, Mandala Congress Party President Katkuri Devender Reddy and AMC Chairman Chandupatla Raji Reddy have come to the forefront of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had done. Speaking on the occasion, Rahul Gandhi said that as part of the election campaign, Rahul Gandhi had given the people of Telangana to pass the BC Caste Program when the state's Chief Minister's honorary Shri Revanth Reddy came to power, as well as the Supreme Court's SC

classification Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who has been honored by the SC classification bill for the first time in the country, thanked Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on behalf of the Congress party, as well as self-employment to the unemployed youth Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that Rajiv Young Development for Fiction, providing employment opportunities by the banks by providing employment opportunities by the banks by giving them 80% subsidy and providing employment to them. The event was attended by members of the Parakala Coordinating Committee, Kunkumeshwar Temple Committee Chairman Koguri Rajeshwara Rao, Former Councilors Panchagiri Jayamma, Madikonda Sampath Kumar, Former MPP Rammurthy, Nalubolu Krishnaya Ghanadi, Dasarayan, Band Ramesh, Mark Raghupathi Goud, Nallela Anil Anil Doll Chandramouli Dubasi Venkataswamy, Ambiru Mahender, Sunkari Dilip, MD Tajuddin MD Aji Fur Gemini, Macha Sumani, Congress Party affiliated leaders and others participated.

In the Medak district veldurthy center gouda community honor to new ramayampet excise department ci narender reddy & staff



"Indian chronicle.march20. "In the Medak district centre of veldurthy gouda community members honor to newly appointed ramayampet excise ci & staff and also his spoke to the issues of gouda community welfare problems, the excise ci narender reddy positive resopnd to all problems

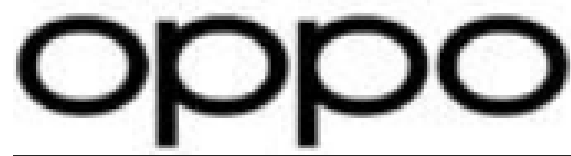
in this program jegga mutta goud, nalacheruvu shekagoud, kodanda sanjeev goud, angadipet ramesh goud, kk goud, nalacheruvu narsimha goud, shakaram venkatesh goud, kodanda mahesh goud gouda sangam members participated.

OPPO Reno13 Skyline-Blue variant goes on sale tomorrow

Hyderabad:OPPO India recently introduced the Skyline-Blue variant of the OPPO Reno13 5G. The device—a blend of power and durability—packs advanced AI-powered cameras, the MediaTek Dimensity 8350 processor, 80W SUPERVOOCTM fast charging, along with certifications for IP66, IP68, and IP69 water and dust resistance.

For the first time, it comes with a 12GB + 512GB storage variant, priced at ₹43,999, alongside an 8GB + 256GB variant for ₹39,999. The smartphone will be available for purchase starting tomorrow i.e., March 20, 2025 at Mainline Retail Outlets, OPPO e-store and Flipkart. Capture the Moment with AI Perfection

Capture the festival like never before with the GenAI-powered camera system—a 50MP primary sensor, 8MP ultra-wide lens, and 2MP monochrome camera—offering dual 4K recording and AI-powered tools like AI Livephoto, AI Clarity, and AI Eraser 2.0 to preserve every vibrant moment. Plus, with IP66, IP68, and IP69 certifications, your



Reno13 is ready for stunning underwater photography, making it the perfect companion for all your colourful celebrations. The custom MediaTek Dimensity 8350 on the device ensures up to 60% better peak performance and 55% greater power efficiency, while the 5600mAh battery with 80W SUPERVOOC Flash Charge delivers 17% charge in 5 minutes and a full charge in 47 minutes. Long Lasting Durability The Skyline-Blue Reno13 5G is engineered to handle water, dust, and colour with its aerospace-grade aluminium frame, Corning Gorilla Glass 7i body, and OPPO's All-Round Armour architecture that offers superior shock resistance and long-lasting durability.

Its 6.59-inch 1.5K OLED Pro XDR display delivers crystal-clear visuals with a 1,200nits peak brightness for absolute legibility under the bright sun and even in dim environments. Its 120Hz refresh rate promises smooth scrolling and gaming, while its 93.4% screen-to-body ratio allows for an almost borderless viewing experience. ColorOS 15 for Seamless Experience The Reno13 runs on ColorOS 15, offering a refined suite of AI-powered features designed to enhance both productivity and creativity. With OPPO's 60-month fluency testing, the device promises smooth and reliable performance for up to 5 years.

PBPartners Brings 'Samvaad' to Hyderabad, their flagship event for Stakeholder Engagement



Hyderabad:PBPartners, the PoSP arm of Policybazaar, recently had a Samvaad event in Hyderabad, their flagship initiative designed to nurture meaningful connections with agent partners and employees through open dialogue and collaborative engagement. This program highlights PBPartners' dedicated commitment to enhancing relationships, reinforcing service excellence, and driving collective success.

The Samvaad session in Hyderabad took place recently, bringing together a remarkable gathering of around 60 top agent partners and employees from across all business units. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Mr. Dhruv Sarin, Co-Founder of PB Partners, alongside business leaders including, Neeraj Adhana, National Sales Head for Health Insurance, Amit Bhadoria, National Sales Head for Motor Insurance, Rohitashwa Mishra, National Sales Head for Commercial Lines Insurance, and Rahul Mahesh Mishra, Associate Director, Sales - Life Insurance, PBPartners. Through Samvaad, Mr. Dhruv Sarin has covered key business locations across India, engaging directly with stakeholders to ensure the organization continues to thrive by incorporating their invaluable insights. The Hyderabad session saw agent partners sharing valuable feedback, exploring practical solutions to address their concerns effectively and engaging in enriching conversations about shared goals. "The Samvaad event conducted in Hyderabad was a great success. It is an initiative that reflects our commitment to building a collaborative space where every agent partner's voice matters. This initiative is a step forward in our journey of innovation and excellence. By connecting with our agent partners and employees across the country, we aim to create solutions tailored to their needs, while driving mutual growth and success," said Mr. Dhruv Sarin, Co-Founder, PBPartners. The brand's leadership team also took the opportunity to provide updates on recent initiatives and unveil plans for the future, including the introduction of innovative products and cross-sell services. These updates further cement PBPartners' commitment to empowering agent partners and driving sustainable growth. As PBPartners continues to grow its network and deepen its stakeholder engagement, the company remains committed to creating programs like Samvaad to empower agent partners and drive industry transformation.

This summer, stay safe at the pool!

GNS News Agency, March 20

Hyderabad: Hot weather conditions and the impending conclusion of exam season in Hyderabad have started to fuel the demand and urge to hit the nearest swimming pool. While you are busy renewing last year's expired swimming pool membership and buying a fresh pair of trunks, you should also be aware of some basic precautions that one must take before jumping into the cool waters.

Miss World 2025 - Hyderabad Schedule Arrival & Opening Ceremony



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): May 6-7: Contestants from 120 countries arrive in Hyderabad May 10: Grand opening

ceremony at Gachibowli Indoor Stadium, featuring vibrant Telangana folk and tribal dance performances Cultural & Heritage Tours May 12: Group 4 (Asia & Oceania) contestants explore Buddhavanam at Nagarjuna Sagar May 13: Contestants embark on a heritage walk at Charminar and Laad Bazaar, followed by a royal dinner at Chowmahalla Palace May 14: Group 1 (America & Caribbean) contestants engage with students and communities at Kaloji Kala Kshetram, Warangal, followed by a visit to Ramappa Temple May 15: Group 2 (Europe) contestants visit Yadagirigutta Temple and experience the traditional handloom industry at Pochampally village Special Engagements & Competitions May 16: Group 3 (Africa & Middle East) contestants participate in a medical tour of AIG, Yashoda, and Apollo hospitals in Hyderabad May 17: Miss World Sports Finals at Gachibowli Indoor

Stadium, followed by a visit to Experium Eco-Tourism Park and a Telangana Cuisine Festival May 19: Contestants visit the Telangana Police Integrated Command & Control Centre (TGPICCC) to learn about safety initiatives, followed by a tour of Tank Bund, Ambedkar Statue, and Secretariat Competitions & Special Events May 20-21: Region-specific fast-track selections at T-Hub, Hyderabad (Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Europe) May 21: Arts & crafts workshop at Shilparamam May 22: Miss World Talent Final at Shilpakala Vedika, May 23: Head-to-Head Challenge Final at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, May 24: Top Model & Fashion Final at HiteX May 25: Jewellery & Pearl Fashion Show at HiteX, May 26: Gala Dinner at British Residency & Taj Falaknuma, featuring cultural performances Grand Finale & Celebrations May 31: Miss World 2024 Grand Finale - Live at HiteX, June 2: Winners meet the Telangana Chief Minister & Governor at Raj Bhavan on Telangana Formation

Multi-specialty veterinary hospital 'Pet First' launched at Kokapet



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): A cutting-edge veterinary multi-specialty hospital named 'Pet First' has opened in Narsingi, Kokapet, Hyderabad, aiming to deliver top-notch medical care for pets.

The inauguration was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, along with Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Uttam Kumar Reddy, Tummalala Nageshwar Rao and Jupally Krishna Rao, as well as MLAs Madan Mohan Rao, Vivek, Prem Sagar Rao, Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, Murali Nayak and Arekapudi Gandhi, MLC Aamir Ali, former Indian Cricketer Azharuddin and Padmaja, who is also the Founder and Managing Director of Pet First. During the event, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the growing demand for pet hospitals in the Hyderabad metropolitan area due to the increasing number of pet owners in urban settings. Bhatti Vikramarka noted, "There is a common perception that comprehensive medical care for pets is not

accessible in all areas of the city. We are pleased to welcome the Pet First Multi-Specialty Hospital, equipped with advanced technology and 24/7 medical services." "I have also been a pet owner for many years and understand the challenges that arise when there is no private hospital available to provide round-the-clock medical care. I genuinely hope that Pet-First hospital will develop into a prominent facility offering medical services in Hyderabad," the Deputy Chief Minister said. During the event, Padmaja, the Founder and Managing Director of Pet First, expressed, "Our pet 'Max' holds significant importance in my life." As both a pet parent and entrepreneur, I am dedicated to enhancing animal welfare. This drive led me to establish a cutting-edge center focused on modern veterinary healthcare, she said. Padmaja further mentioned that this hospital serves as a comprehensive location for advanced diagnostic testing, emergency services, specialized treatments, wellness initiatives, a pet rehabilitation facility, and pet training. "We are committed to our promise of 'love for pets and protection for their families,'" she added. During the event, Pet First founder and MLA K Madan Mohan Rao emphasised the importance of safeguarding not just humans, but all living creatures within society. "Pet First is dedicated to creating a world where pets receive proper care and medical attention. Our mission is to enhance the standards of veterinary treatment through modern facilities, offering top-notch services to both pets and their owners. We provide 24/7 emergency and critical care, advanced testing, surgical specialists, comprehensive pet healthcare, and a team of highly experienced veterinary professionals," he stated. (NSS)

BBIL announces CGT & Viral Vector Production

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL), a pioneer in affordable indigenous vaccine development and manufacturing, announced today its foray into Cell & Gene Therapy (CGT) & Viral Vector Production at Genome Valley - expanding its expertise from vaccine innovation to leading-edge regenerative and personalised therapies that promise hope for millions. This ushers in a new era of gene and cell therapies to tackle scientific challenges—such as targeted gene expression, immune system modulation, and long-term cell survival—the work will span from boosting immune responses against cancer to ensuring that therapeutic proteins are safely accepted in patients with genetic diseases like hemophilia.

The 50,000-sft dedicated state-of-the-art CGT facility represents the next milestone in BBIL's longstanding mission to deliver targeted, life-saving treatments that address unmet clinical needs globally by concentrating on critical conditions such as hematological malignancies and inherited blood disorders. Outlining the purpose behind establishing India's only vertically integrated cell and gene therapy facility, Dr Krishna Ella, Executive Chairman, Bharat Biotech said, "Gene and cell therapies represent some of the most intricate, scientifically advanced treatments available today, involving sophisticated processes that require expertise in precise genetic manipulation and specialized manufacturing capabilities. Bharat Biotech, with its extensive experience and proven excellence in viral vaccine manufacturing is uniquely positioned to master these complexities and produce human-grade vectors at the scale and consistency needed for clinical trials, thus advancing the global fight against rare and complex diseases."

Dr Raches Ella, Chief Development Officer, Bharat Biotech, spearheading this CGT initiative, said "Bharat aims to democratize gene therapies, traditionally considered pro-



hibitively expensive and available primarily in developed nations or premium institutions. Our established expertise in producing viral vectors are essential for cell and gene therapy applications - the crucial material for anti-cancer and genetic disorders and robust clinical development abilities for QC release. Additionally, it has capabilities to manufacture multiple platform products for various disease indications, including blood cancers, solid organ cancers, and genetic disorders." Prof. Krishanu Saha, University of Wisconsin, Madison, said: "Innovations in biomanufacturing for potentially curative cell and gene therapies originate worldwide.

It's thrilling to witness the expertise and commitment to developing and scaling novel ideas in India, particularly at Bharat Biotech. My lab has initiated a pioneering collaboration with Bharat Biotech to develop next-generation CAR (chimeric antigen receptor) cell therapies using AI. Ultimately, genuine innovations in both product design and scaling will enhance patient care globally." (NSS)

GHMC comes up with "fogging request"

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has come up with a new digital feature "fogging on request" in "My GHMC" app.

Any citizen of GHMC, who is facing mosquito menace can login in My GHMC mobile app and request for fogging. This request will be received by assistant entomologist and assigned to the area fogging worker. Once the request is attended by fogging in that area it gets resolved by uploading photo with geo location. Enabling technology might solve the generic complaint of not covering many areas and repetitive fogging in some areas and resources can be utilised optimally. Number of slots will be available based on staff availability of the area. To prevent redundant requests from same area once fogged that will be restricted for one week. Initially this feature functionality is to be tested as pilot at Jubilee Hills circle and will be extended to the



entire GHMC. Citizens are requested to use this opportunity, said Additional Commissioner IT, GHMC. (NSS)

NSUI unveils Parliament siege poster



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): Venkata Swamy, Telangana President of the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of Congress, unveiled the Parliament siege poster at Gandhi Bhavan here on Thursday. In protest against the new draft University Grants Commission (UGC) regulations recommend by the Union government, the NSUI called for the Parliament siege programme on March 24. During the event, Venkata Swamy, the Telangana NSUI President, said that approximately 400 individuals from Telangana plan to travel to Delhi to participate in the demonstration. He criticised the BJP-led Union government regarding the draft UGC regulations, highlighting concerns over a proposal that aims to weaken the eligibility criteria for university vice-chancellor appointments. Venkata Swamy also expressed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attempting to exert control over the UGC. (NSS)

Bandi Sanjay gets relief in HC in communal hatred case

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): Relief was received by Union minister of State Bandi Sanjay Kumar in the Telangana High Court. The Court has quashed the case registered against him. During the last GHMC elections, a case was registered against Bandi Sanjay during the campaigning. Some people complained that Bandi Sanjay spoke in a way that incited religious hatred as part of a workers' meeting. On this complaint, the Secunderabad Market Police registered a case and also filed a charge-sheet. However, the matter came up for hearing in the High Court today. The lawyer representing the Union Minister explained to the court that there was no evidence to say that Bandi

Sanjay incited religious hatred and that the case was registered against Bandi Sanjay without evidence. Following this, the High Court judge announced that the case was being quashed on the grounds that it was registered without evidence. (NSS)



11 Taiwanese companies collaborate with Telangana to launch operations



Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): In a significant development for Taiwan-India economic relations, the Allegiance Group has signed a cooperation agreement with the Telangana government to establish the first International Technology and Industrial Park (I.T.I.P) within the state's "Future City" initiative. This collaboration successfully attracted Taiwanese foreign direct investments (FDIs), with 11 companies signing MOUs for investment during the ceremony. The event was witnessed by Ho Chun-hsin, President of the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce in India (TCCIN), senior officials from the Government of Telangana, and Manhasinh Yadav, Director General of the India Taipei Association (ITA), marking a significant milestone in the growing presence of Taiwanese FDIs in India. This collaboration is expected to inject Rs 2,000 crore (US\$231.2 million) into the regional economy, potentially creating 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. The first group of companies signing the MOUs includes firms specialising in electronics, solar energy, and advanced manufacturing. Their participation reflects a strong commitment to investment and collaboration, further demonstrating the increasing interest of Taiwanese businesses in India's expanding market. One

of the participating business leaders noted that geopolitical factors are playing a crucial role in shaping investment strategies, with companies proactively diversifying their operations to mitigate risks. Establishing production and sales bases in India is seen as a strategic move to ensure long-term business stability. The initiative offers transitioning Taiwanese investors unique advantages such as permanent land ownership rights, a significant departure from the leasehold arrangements commonly available in other regions. This strategic framework is further enhanced by substantial state-level incentives, including subsidies for construction, logistics, and workforce training, all tailored specifically to support Taiwanese businesses. The park's integration within the Telangana's flagship Future City project ensures access to cutting-edge infrastructure and connectivity, positioning it as an ideal destination for Taiwanese investments amidst shifting global dynamics. Simon Lee, chairman of Allegiance Group, highlighted Telangana's high-tech industries and skilled workforce, aiming to merge foreign manufacturing advantages with India's labor pool to create a thriving business economy for all. At the same time, the Telangana government and the Allegiance Group will collaborate to develop the "Formosa Town" project, which will be the first Taiwanese ecological community in India. This initiative aims to create a sense of belonging for expatriates working in the state, providing them with a welcoming environment that they can consider their second home. The strategic value of Telangana's ITIP initiative transcends geopolitical considerations, underscoring the vital role Taiwanese businesses play in India's development. The State government views this partnership as a catalyst for transformative investment opportunities, paving the way for a prosperous future that benefits both local and international stakeholders. (NSS)

We lost elections due to jealousy & hatred: KTR

Suryapet, March 20 (NSS): BRS party working president K Tarakarama Rao met with his party's key workers in Suryapet district today. Speaking on the occasion, KTR said former CM of undivided AP State NTR showed self-respect of the Telugu people to the country first and former CM KCR showed it to the world later. He said without the pink party's flag, there was no Telangana State and added that it also stood effectively as an Opposition party. "The BRS party successfully provided a movement and effective governance. Telangana State needs its rule. After the defeat in the assembly and parliament elections, they are saying that BRS work is over. But, we stood with the blessings of the people," he said, adding that they lost because the ruling Congress party propagated jealousy, hatred and hopes against us." Former minister KTR said the role of the Opposition and movements were not new to the BRS party. He said Revanth Reddy, who became the CM by taking the help of a couple of YouTubers, was now filing criminal cases against the same YouTubers. He said CM KCR was arrogant and a liar and spread a poisonous campaign. KTR said the history of providing irrigation water to Suryapet district belongs to the BRS party. However, what the BRS party lost was power. Not the people's affection, he said. Congress and BJP parties are enemies of Telangana at any time. BJP leaders do not speak against CM Revanth Reddy. He accused Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay of protecting Revanth from being attacked. He said people should come to Warangal public meeting of the party



on April 27. KTR made it clear that there was nothing wrong with their party MLA Jagadish Reddy's speech in the State Assembly. KTR said KCR was a great leader, who left alone in 2001 by hoisting the pink flag and creating a tsunami from nothing and achieving Telangana State. He said jealousy, hatred and hope were the reasons for the defeat of the BRS party in the Assembly elections. He participated and addressed the BRS party meeting organized in Suryapet. "In the united Nalgonda district, we built many projects, including medical colleges, Damaracharla power plant, Yadadri temple. Why did we lose? A singer replied like this. He said jealousy and hatred were the reasons for BRS losing the elections. Jealousy means that after coming to the ruling party, they advertised that the MLAs had bought a new car and a new house. (NSS)

Tenth tests from today

...**** MEO Ramadevi.****Parakala, March 20, (Indian Chronicle):****The tenth class will be conducted from today till April 4, MEO Ramadevi said on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, they said that 220 students attended each center as three examination centers in the center of the Parakal town, the Government High School (Government Junior College Ground), the Social Welfare Gurukul School Malakpet and the Social Gurukul Welfare School (Atmakur) and said that the test centers were set up to write tenth class annual exams with a total of 660 people. Similarly, the exams will be conducted from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and that the exam centers should be seen in the examination centers. He said that all arrangements have been set up in advance of all the arrangements without any difficulties. Police Pahara, CC cameras, medical staff and drinking water facilities have been set up without any undesirable incidents for students who write the exam.



CPM demands govt solve Anganwadi & ASHA workers woes

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): CPM State secretary John Wesley today demanded that the State government fulfil the just demands of Anganwadi and ASHA workers. "Anganwadi and ASHA workers in the State are facing problems like wage hike, job security, PF, ESI, pension, insurance, VRS, retirement benefits and so on. They have staged large-scale movements and struggles to resolve the problems. Although the State government promised on many occasions that their problems will be resolved, they remain unresolved. The CPI(M) Telangana State Committee was demanding that the government immediately resolve their just problems," he said. Wesley also said along with the privatization of ICDS, the State government was implementing the National Education Policy brought by the Central government. He said the PMSHri scheme had been launched in 56 centers in 28 districts of the State and a new policy was being introduced in the name of mobile Anganwadis. "Due to this, the poor are being deprived of

the services provided by the Anganwadi centers. As a result, there is a risk that the ICDS will weaken and close down. Along with the PMSHri scheme, mobile Anganwadi centers should be completely abolished in the State.

The CPI(M) is demanding that the 10 months' wages due to them be paid immediately. They have been protesting against the fixed salary of Rs 18,000 for Asha workers and the abolition of the target. The State government has said it will hold talks with them and form a committee with an IAS officer to resolve the issue and take action based on those proposals. It promised to increase the salaries of Asha workers and provide job security during the elections. But their problems have not been resolved," he said. He also said the CPI(M) was demanding that their legitimate demands such as abolition of holidays, ANC, PSC and other targets, retirement benefits of Rs 5 lakh, provision of restrooms for Asha workers in all hospitals, half of their salaries as pension and so on be addressed. (NSS)

Police registers case against celebrities in Bettings app

Hyderabad, March 20 (NSS): A key development has taken place in the betting apps case. Miyapur police have registered a case against popular actors, who were among those who promoted the betting apps. Some 25 people, including actors and social media influencers, were in the list of the FIR. The list of film celebrities includes Rana Daggubati, Prakash Raj, Vijay Deverakonda, Manchu Lakshmi, Praneetha and Nidhi Agarwal. The social media

influencers include Ananya Nagalla, Siri Hanumanthu, Srirukhi, Varshini Soundararajan, Vasanthi Krishnan, Shobha Shetty, Amrutha Chowdhury, Nayani Pavani, Neha Paran, Pandu, Padmavati, Imran Khan, Vishnu Priya, Harsha Sai, Bayya Sunny Yadav, Anchor Shyamala, Tasty Teja, Ritu Chowdhury, and Bandaru Supreeta. The police registered a case based on the complaint of Pramod Sharma, a resident of Miyapur. (NSS)

Delhi Metro completes tunnelling on Phase 4's deepest underground stretch on Golden Line



GNS News Agency, March 20

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) Tuesday completed tunnelling on the deepest underground stretch of Phase 4 with a tunnel breakthrough at the IGNOU station on the Aerocity-Tughlakabad corridor, known as the Golden Line. The newly completed tunnel, stretching 1,460 metres from Chhattarpur Mandir to IGNOU, was constructed using a tunnel boring machine (TBM). The depth of the tunnel varies between 18 and 39 metres. Another parallel tunnel on the same route was completed on February 25. The DMRC has now achieved three tunnelling breakthroughs in the last four weeks as part of Phase 4 under-

ground work.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa attended the event. Slamming the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Gupta said, "The earlier government tried to stop the Metro project. The Delhi government's share was not given. Even today, the Delhi government's liability of Rs 10,000 crore towards Delhi Metro is pending." The Golden Line, part of Phase 4 of the Delhi Metro expansion, aims to improve connectivity in the city's southern parts. The corridor will link Aerocity, a major transit hub near the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, with Tughlakabad. Approximately 19.343 km of the approved 40.109 km corridor is underground.

Only two Delhi Metro tunnels are deeper than this: a tunnel on the Magenta Line in Phase 3 was built at a depth of about 30 metres, while another for the Airport Express Line passes below the Rajiv Chowk station at about 45 metres. According to the DMRC, the tunnel was built using the earth pressure balancing method (EPBM), with a concrete lining made of precast tunnel rings cast at a facility in Mundka. The construction involved the installation of 1,048 rings with an inner diameter of 5.8 metres. "This tunnelling project was challenging because of the high mica content," said Amit Bagla, an engineer with construction firm Larsen and Toubro.

Facing tax demands of Rs 243.74 crore, Clean Ganga Mission to contest I-T orders, seeks nod to revise returns



GNS News Agency, March 20

With no end in sight to its tax woes, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), which is facing tax demands amounting to Rs 243.74 crore, has contested the income tax (I-T) department's assessment orders and is in the process of filing appeals. According to the NMCG, the central agency responsible for mitigating pollution in the Ganga River and its tributaries, "the faceless assessment process" has made matters "more difficult". It has now requested the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to allow it to revise its returns.

Initially registered as a society on August 12, 2011, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the NMCG was later upgraded to an 'authority' on October 7, 2016, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Despite this transition, its Permanent Account Number (PAN) remained categorised as an Association of Persons (AOP). This led to scrutiny by the I-T department's software, which flagged it as a high-income entity, resulting in repeated tax

notices. The issue was raised in the joint meetings of the NMCG's Audit Review Committee (ARC) and Budget Review Committee (BRC). At the most recent meeting on February 7, NMCG officials highlighted the ongoing tax concerns. "Since NMCG's PAN is in the capacity of 'Association of Persons', NMCG has been receiving a number of notices from IT department every year. While the notices for AY 2023-24 & 2024-25 have been resolved, 2 major demands of AY 2022-23 amounting to Rs 243.74 crore are pending. NMCG has contested the orders and is in the process of filing appeals against the assessment order," stated the minutes of the meeting circulated on March 11. "The committee was informed that the NMCG is unable to take the advantage of Section 10 (46) notification under the IT Act, even though NMCG was notified vide notification dated 26 March 2024 as a Government Authority for the AY 2021-22 to 2023-24, as the Rols for the said years had already been filed. Further, the faceless assessment process has made matters more difficult," it noted. "CBDT has been requested vide application dated 15th January 2025 to permit NMCG to revise its IT returns. An application has also been filed to extend the notification u/s 10 (46) beyond AY 2023-24 on 31 May 2024, followed by a DO from DG- NMCG to CBDT Chairman on 20th January 2025," the minutes of the meeting noted. Two years ago, the NMCG had mulled to amend its PAN after being picked up by the I-T department's scrutiny software as a high-income entity, and getting income tax notices almost every year. In a meeting of the NMCG's ARC and the BRC held in December 2023, the agency's executive director (finance) had proposed to amend its PAN to reflect its status as a "government authority", which was approved by the committee.

Govt seeks public opinion on conservation reserve status for Navi Mumbai's DPS Flamingo Lake

GNS News Agency, March 20

Maharashtra's forest department has initiated the process of granting conservation reserve status to the 30-acre DPS Flamingo Lake, with over 1,000 people joining a supportive signature campaign, following concerns that stagnant water in the lake is making it unsuitable for migratory flamingos. A forest department official said, "A report compiling public opinion and the collected signatures will be submitted to the government. The mangrove cell will send its proposal to conserve the wetland as a conservation reserve." The move follows a high-level government committee's recommendation on September 23, 2024, to grant conservation status to the lake. The committee, which included representatives of the City and Industrial Development Corporation and was led by the forest secretary, also directed Cidco to keep water inlet points 3 and 4 open to ensure proper tidal water flow. "Despite these directives, Cidco has not taken action, leaving the water stagnant," said B N Kumar, director of Navi Mumbai-based Natconnect Foundation.

A recent inspection by the mangrove cell found that blocked pipes continue to prevent water circulation, leading to algae growth over half the lake. The cell has urged Cidco to clear obstructions and restore water flow. "Navi Mumbai



International Airport Limited (NMIAL), in its environmental impact assessment report, committed to protecting biodiversity around the project, a pledge reiterated in compliance reports submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change," added Kumar. Public support for the lake's conservation continues to grow. Sandeep Sareen of the Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society said more than 1,000 people have signed a petition urging the government to protect the lake. Environmentalists have also approached Forest Minister Ganesh Naik to save the lake. Naik assured that all possible efforts would be made to save the wetland.

Karnataka moves to clear land 'encroached on' by Union minister Kumaraswamy

GNS News Agency, March 20

H D Kumaraswamy, Indian express Ahead of the court hearing in January, H D Kumaraswamy had accused the Karnataka Congress government of conspiring to "grab" 45 acres of land owned by him near Bidadi in Ramanagara. Union Minister for Steel and Heavy Industries H D Kumaraswamy suffered a setback on Tuesday as Karnataka's revenue department initiated measures to clear land at Kethaganahalli in Ramanagara district that he had allegedly encroached on. The move came a day after the Karnataka High Court expressed strong views over implementing its order to clear the 14 acres of encroachment.

The Ramanagara district administration deployed its staff and earthmovers to clear the encroachment, with Deputy Commissioner Yeshwanth V Gururkar leading the drive.

The state government formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to clear the encroachment in January, ahead of the hearing of a contempt petition in the high court moved by the NGO Samaj Parivartana Samudaya on January 29 over the government's failure to recover the land allegedly encroached on by influential people, including Kumaraswamy. The government had given an undertaking in the court to clear encroachment at Kethiganahalli in the district neighbouring Bengaluru.



The case of alleged encroachment by Kumaraswamy and others dates back to 2014, when the Lokayukta sought a report on the land records in Kethiganahalli village. Apart from Kumaraswamy, former Mandya MP G Madegowda, former MLA D C Thammaanna—close relative of the JD(S) minister—and an aunt of Kumaraswamy were accused of encroaching on government land valued at Rs 130 crore at the time.

Subsequently, the Lokayukta ordered an investigation by revenue officials and measures to ensure recovery of the land. It had also sought criminal action against those found trespassing on the land, apart from disciplinary measures against officials.

Mumbai University launches climate skills programme in association with British Council



GNS News Agency, March 20

In a first, students and faculty at Mumbai University will receive training to tackle the urgent climate change challenges unique to India. This new climate skills programme launched in collaboration with the British Council aims to equip both students and teachers with essential skills. The programme is part of the broader Climate Skill – Seeds for Transition initiative launched by the British Council for five countries: Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Vietnam and India. Mumbai University is among three institutions selected in India to implement the programme. It seeks to develop master trainers from the university and its affiliated colleges to extend its impact to a wider community.

According to information from Mumbai University, this programme will be rolled out in stages, with faculty members and representatives from various university departments actively involved. For the first phase, starting on March 22, as many as 25 master trainers and three co-facilitators have been selected by the university to receive training from global experts appointed by the British Council. The first phase will include five-day training with

experts appointed by the British Council. Following this, these master trainers are expected to conduct various local activities, including workshops and taking up projects with local administrations.

Apart from professors, students selected for the programme will work alongside local administrations, NGOs, and other stakeholders to launch region-specific climate actions. These may include creating public biodiversity registers, conducting wetland conservation programs, and performing energy audits to promote sustainable development and reduce climate change vulnerabilities in local communities. Dr Aparna Phadke, assistant professor in the geography department and the programme lead at Mumbai University, said, "Our goal is to train trainers who implement similar programmes in their respective institutions. Mumbai University has been actively engaged in initiatives such as biodiversity surveys and wetland conservation, which will serve as expertise for students to bring to local administrations when they collaborate on various projects under this programme." An official from Mumbai University said, "While the British Council had planned to train 130 trainers and 800 students, Mumbai University has expanded the scope by involving 225 professors and 1,200 students. Increased participation is expected to ensure broader engagement." The official added that when these people start working on projects with local administrations, the collaborations will take the discussions to grassroots levels. Dr Phadke emphasised that to ensure the sustainability of these efforts beyond the collaboration with the British Council, the university plans to establish green clubs in its affiliated colleges. These clubs will be managed by master trainers who will be trained through the initiative. Additionally, the university is exploring incorporating these activities into academic credits to encourage greater student participation, she said.

In Himachal Assembly, LoP Jai Ram Thakur raises issue of Bhindranwale flag display in Kullu, urges CM's intervention

GNS News Agency, March 20

Himachal Pradesh Leader of Opposition (LoP) Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday raised concerns over reports of people entering the state from Punjab with flags that displayed slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's image. Speaking during the Zero Hour of the ongoing Budget Session in the state Legislative Assembly, Thakur also brought up the recent attack on a Himachal Roadways Transport Corporation (HRTC) bus in Punjab last week.

"It is very unfortunate that people coming from Punjab are carrying Bhindranwale flags in Himachal Pradesh. A recent incident was reported in Kullu. Additionally, an HRTC bus was attacked in Punjab, with the attackers wielding swords. They pasted posters of Bhindranwale and Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on the bus. Will the CM ensure that he takes up these serious issues with the Punjab Government?" Last Saturday, an altercation broke out after residents in Kullu objected to the display of flags with the image of Bhindranwale on motorcycles driven by people from Punjab. Two residents were injured in the incident. Later, the Kullu district police intervened to ease the tension. Responding to Thakur's statements, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu assured him that both issues would be taken up with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. Kullu district police, meanwhile, registered two First Information Reports (FIR) against unknown people in the wake of the incident. The FIRs were registered at the police stations in Manali and Manikaran. According to the police, Subhash Thakur of Chhiyal village in Manali was threatened with murder when he raised objections to two motorcyclists who were carrying Bhindranwale's flag on March 12. The flag was reportedly fixed on the front wheel of the



two-wheeler. The other FIR was lodged by the owner of Himachal Pradesh Village resort who said a group of motorcyclists from another state got into an argument with a couple on March 15. The owner added that the motorcyclists were carrying Bhindranwale's flags and during the argument, they attacked a local driver, Ramesh, with swords and sticks. The LoP also highlighted concerns over law and order, citing the recent assassination attempt on former Congress MLA Bumber Thakur at the residence of another ex-legislator in Bilaspur. Addressing the House, he said, "On Holi, an assassination attempt was made on former Congress MLA Bumber Thakur. The investigation is ongoing, but given the statements he has been making, especially against his political rival, the situation does not look good. I expect the government to take serious note of this." Before Thakur raised the matter, Sukhu had informed the House about the status of the investigation into the attack on Bumber Thakur, stating that three suspects involved in the firing were arrested, while two shooters continue to be at large.

Thunderstorms predicted for Kolkata, South Bengal in next few days, temperature to drop by 2-4 degrees

GNS News Agency, March 20

The IMD has forecast a partly cloudy sky for Kolkata on Tuesday, with maximum and minimum temperatures likely to hover around 34 and 25 degrees Celsius respectively. South Bengal is gearing up for a period of unsettled weather, with thunderstorms and rain predicted from Thursday to Sunday, bringing relief from recent high temperatures. Meanwhile, residents of Sub-Himalayan West Bengal can expect a prolonged period of dry weather according to the latest forecast.

A noticeable drop in temperature, ranging from 2 to 4 degrees Celsius, is expected across the region. Yesterday, Tuesday, saw a marked decrease in minimum temperatures in parts of Gangetic West Bengal, and an appreciable fall in both Sub-Himalayan and Gangetic regions. Conversely, some areas in Sub-Himalayan West Bengal experienced a slight rise in temperature.

Darjeeling in the hills recorded the lowest minimum temperature at 11.6 degrees Celsius, while Coochbehar in the plains saw a minimum of 15.6 degrees Celsius. Purulia registered the highest maximum temperature of 40.1 degrees Celsius, with Kalimpong (hills) reaching 24.4 degrees



Celsius. Despite the recent light rainfall, which provided temporary relief from the intense heat, the state continues to experience sweltering conditions. Rain, accompanied by local thunderclouds, was reported in Kolkata, Howrah, and Purba Medinipur on Tuesday evening, offering a brief respite from the day's scorching sun. However, the relief is expected to be short-lived, officials said. Some districts in South Bengal have recently experienced temperatures nearing 40 degrees Celsius, earlier prompting heatwave warnings, which have now been lifted.

Delhi HC refuses to stay trial court proceedings against BJP leader Kapil Mishra in 2020 'communal remarks' case

GNS News Agency, March 20

The Delhi High Court Tuesday refused a request by BJP leader and Delhi Law Minister Kapil Mishra to stay the trial proceedings against him in a 2020 case accusing him of promoting communal enmity. Mishra is challenging the dismissal of a revision petition in the case before a sessions court. Mishra's revision petition had challenged the summons issued to him in the 2020 case lodged against him under Section 125 (promoting enmity between classes in connection with election) of the Representation of the People Act. Mishra has been accused of making objectionable statements in the electronic media in 2020 like "Delhi mein chhote chhote Pakistan bane (there are mini-Pakistans in Delhi)" and "Shaheen Bagh mein Pak ki entry (Pakistan has entered Shaheen Bagh)". The case also pertained to a tweet by Mishra that there will be an "India vs Pakistan" contest on the "streets of Delhi" on February 8, the day of the Delhi Assembly elections in 2020. Senior counsel

Mahesh Jethmalani requested the high court to stay the trial court proceedings from framing charges against Mishra. Justice Ravinder Dubeja recorded in the order that the court "does not feel the necessity to stay the proceedings of trial court", and made it clear that the "trial court is at liberty to proceed further". While Jethmalani vehemently pressed for a stay, even arguing that Mishra's "reputation will be damaged if charges are framed", while seeking a deferment in the framing of the charges till the high court disposes of his petition, Justice Dubeja refused to accede to the request. Justice Dubeja orally remarked, "... Otherwise you'll go before trial court and say matter is subjudice before the high court and seek adjournment... even if trial court frames the charge, this (petition before the high court) will not become infructuous. Let the proceedings continue... If you get a favourable finding (before the trial court), all proceedings will go... You will not be prejudiced with continuation of the trial

Over 69,000 admissions under RTE Act confirmed in Maharashtra, school union says will take fees from students as Rs 2,400 crore pending from govt



GNS News Agency, March 20

As the deadline for admissions under the Right to Education (RTE) Act in Maharashtra ended on March 10, over 69,000 students have confirmed their enrollment. However, the Maharashtra English School Trustees Association (MESTA), which has over 20,000 member schools, said private schools will have to charge fees for students admitted under the RTE Act as the state government has not paid full dues since 2018.

MESTA president Sanjayrao Tayade Patil said, "Schools across the state have not received complete dues

since 2018. These dues amount to Rs 2,400 crore. Many schools have around 400 RTE students. How are the schools supposed to function without fees? We will request the parents to pay the fees this year, and as soon as the government reimburses us, we will pay the parents back." The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act, 2009, commonly known as the RTE Act, makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14. It also requires all private schools to reserve 25 per cent of seats for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. On March 11, the Maharashtra Ministry of School Education and Sports put out a government resolution releasing Rs 200 crore through supplementary demand for disbursement as RTE funds. However, Patil said this amount was insufficient when compared to the claimed dues of Rs 2,400 crore.

The window for confirmation of admission under the regular selection list was from February 17 to March 10, under which 1,01,967 students were selected, and 69,686 students confirmed their admissions. According to a notice released by Director of Primary Education Sharad Gosavi, the admission process under the first selection list was set to begin on March 18. He appealed to parents to check SMS alerts and the RTE website for updates on the application process. Admissions can be confirmed until March 24.

HC upholds Haryana judicial services selection criteria, dismisses plea against appointment of 2 additional sessions judges

GNS News Agency, March 20

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has upheld the selection criteria for Haryana Superior Judicial Services and dismissed a petition challenging the appointment of two successful candidates as additional district and sessions judges. The ruling, delivered by Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sumeet Goel, reaffirmed the validity of the minimum qualifying marks requirement and rejected the plea for relaxation of marks. The case revolved around a challenge to the 2015 recruitment process, with the petitioner arguing that Clause 15 of the advertisement—mandating a minimum of 50 per cent aggregate marks for general-category candidates—was unconstitutional and beyond the powers of the high court.

The court, however, held that the requirement was legally valid and aligned with judicial precedents. Citing Supreme Court judgments, it observed that "where the principal statutory provisions and regulatory framework are silent, the High Court, in its administrative authority, can supplement such deficiencies to uphold standards of merit and suitability". It further stated that stipulating a minimum qualifying benchmark ensured that "only persons with prescribed qualities and capacities are selected". On the selection of the two successful candidates, the court found no irregularities or violation of rules. The petitioner had argued that they were appointed despite failing to meet eligibility criteria, thereby vitiating the process. However, the court ruled that the selection was conducted in strict adherence to the prescribed conditions. It noted that both candidates had successfully cleared the written examination and viva voce and that their names were recommended based on merit.

The petitioner further alleged that the two successful candidates had been granted undue relaxation at the final stage, contending that similar grace marks should have been extended to him. The court dismissed this argument, clarifying that the relaxations granted to them were within the framework of the rules and did not compromise the



selection's integrity. "Ex post facto relaxation of selection criteria is impermissible, unless explicitly provided for under the governing rules," the court stated, adding that any deviation from prescribed standards must be applied uniformly and not selectively. The court rejected the petitioner's claim that the selection process was unfair. It noted that he had voluntarily participated in the process and challenged the criteria only after being declared unsuccessful. "A candidate who willingly takes part in a selection process cannot turn around to impugn its conditions after failing," the judgment stated, invoking the doctrine of estoppel. The petitioner had applied for the position in response to an advertisement issued in 2015. The selection process included a written examination, a viva voce conducted in September 2017, and a final result declared in August 2018, with appointments made in December 2018. The petitioner challenged the appointments nearly three years later in 2021. The petitioner had secured 467 marks out of 1,000, falling 33 marks short of the qualifying threshold. He sought grace marks, arguing that similar relaxations were granted to the two successful candidates. The court, however, ruled that no arbitrary relaxation of selection criteria was permissible, as it would violate principles of fairness and transparency. Dismissing the petition, the court upheld the appointment of the two successful candidates while reiterating that judicial selections must maintain high standards to preserve the integrity of the judiciary.

Central Railway boosts revenue through non-fare sources, with advertising contributing more than half

GNS News Agency, March 20

The Central Railway Monday said the Mumbai division's several initiatives to generate revenue through non-fare sources resulted in earnings of Rs 95.16 crore in the current financial year from April 2024 to date. A significant portion of the revenue came from out-of-home (OOH) advertising, which contributed Rs 49.14 crore, as per CR. This includes new advertising spaces at Atal Setu, generating Rs 1.16 crore annually. The rail display network, which includes digital and non-digital advertisements, added Rs 19.93 crore to the revenue. Assets under this category include self-ticketing zones at 22 railway stations, projection mapping technology for advertising and glow ball towers at CSMT and Panvel, along with advertisement rights at the Uran and Dronagiri railway stations, said CR.

Mobile advertising has also played a key role, bringing in Rs 15.54 crore, according to CR. This includes vinyl wrapping on 26 mail/express trains, food tray advertisements on premium trains such as Vande Bharat, Deccan Queen, Tejas Express, and Janshatabdi Express, as well as advertising on the headrests and glass doors of select trains. Other sources of non-fare revenue, contributing Rs 10.40 crore, include relaxation massage chairs at Lokmanya



Tilak Terminus (LTT) and Kalyan, outsourced waiting rooms at various stations, battery-operated carts, and vending of miscellaneous items on trains, said CR. In March 2025, CR secured key revenue-generating contracts, including relaxation massage chair facilities at LTT and Kalyan for Rs 16.46 lakh and Rs 15.34 lakh, respectively. Advertisement deals were finalised for Roha station (Rs 5.55 lakh), Tejas Express (Rs 29.70 lakh), and LED screens at Vikhroli, Chunabhatti, and Tilaknagar stations (Rs 2.01 crore), said CR. According to CR, outsourcing two non-air-conditioned waiting rooms at the Thane railway station added Rs 1.81 crore.

Rights petitions against Adani Green Energy projects in Sri Lanka withdrawn

GNS News Agency, March 20

Colombo: Five fundamental rights petitions filed against the Adani Green Energy projects in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka have been withdrawn by the petitioners. The withdrawal comes after the Attorney General filed a motion following Adani Green Energy's notification to the Board of Investment about its decision to cancel its wind energy projects. Last month, the Indian conglomerate announced its withdrawal from further engagement in the renewable wind energy project in Mannar and Pooneryn. Fundamental rights petitions were filed in 2024 after the previous cabinet approved the project in May last year. The petitions pointed to the project's environmental hazards and the lack of transparency. The Adani Group left the project after the new Sri Lankan government led by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake decided late in December to review the project



and renegotiate the power purchase agreement. The previous government-negotiated price of eight cents was considered too high, with the government aiming to bring it below six cents.

'Nagpur violence pre-planned... selected houses, establishments targeted': Maharashtra CM Fadnavis



GNS News Agency, March 20

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Tuesday the violence in Nagpur, which broke out Monday over rumours that a holy book had been desecrated during a protest seeking the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb, seemed like a "planned incident". On Monday, more than 200 members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal held a protest near the Shivaji Maharaj statue in the city, demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb. The protesters allegedly burnt an effigy of the Mughal emperor but the incident sparked rumours of a holy book being desecrated. Four policemen were injured and several vehicles were torched as the violence broke out.

A group of 80-100 people allegedly gathered as the rumour spread on social media, and pelted stones at police personnel. The Nagpur police said they fired tear gas shells and resorted to a lathi charge to disperse a mob in Chitnis Park and Mahal even as violence spread to Kotwali and Ganeshpeth. While speaking in the Maharashtra Assembly, Fadnavis, who also holds the home portfolio, said, "After the morning incident, there was silence. By evening, some people attacked in a pre-planned manner. We found a trolley full of stones and weapons were also found which had been seized. Selected houses and establishments were targeted".

"This seems a planned incident. No one will be spared. Those who attacked police will not be spared at any cost. It will not be tolerated. The police were trying to maintain peace," he said. The chief minister also appealed to people to maintain restraint. "This is a period when festivals of all religions are ongoing. Everyone must keep patience and respect others," he said. Fadnavis said the film Chhaava, based on the life of the son of Shivaji Maharaj, brought the real history of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. "But the emotions of people are overflowing and they are showing anger against Aurangzeb. Despite this, we must show restraint. Maharashtra is getting investment, and we will get it if we manage to keep law and order. I warn everyone that anyone who will disturb the law and order will not be spared," he added.

The Maharashtra CM talked about how the Nagpur violence unfolded. He said at 11.30 am Monday, VHP and Bajrang Dal workers protested in the Mahal area in Nagpur, demanding the removal of the tomb of Aurangzeb, and burnt a replica of the tomb. "By evening, a rumour spread that the tomb had a sheet with religious text. A mob of 200-300 became aggressive and shouted slogans," he said. "Before that, those who wanted to file a case against the Bajrang Dal were called to Ganeshpeth police station. While the police action was on, around 200-300 people started stone pelting with lathis and a dozen two-wheelers were damaged and some people were attacked," he said. In the third incident, a mob of 80-100 attacked the police in the Bhaladpura area, and more vehicles were damaged. "In this incident, 33 policemen were injured which includes 3 DCP rank officers and one of them was attacked with an axe. Around 5 citizens injured, and one of them is in ICU," he added. According to Fadnavis, three cases have been filed at the Ganeshpeth Police Station, and two at the Tehsil Police Station. Meanwhile, a curfew was imposed in several parts of Nagpur — under the jurisdiction of Kotwali, Ganeshpeth, Tehsil, Lakadganj, Pachpavli, Shantinagar, Sakkardara, Nandanvan, Imamwada, Yashodharanagar, and Kapilnagar police stations — after the violence broke out in the city.

How a landscape architect's firm grew to be among country's top brands for all things gardening

GNS News Agency, March 20

Siddhant Bhalinge sits in an office against a background of the bone-dry slopes of the tekdi and grey high-rises under construction. His office is more vibrant, with a scattering of plants in pots, including a peace lily at his table. Nine years ago, Bhalinge had defied sceptics by setting up an online store to supply "everything related to gardening". 'Ugao' was born and has become one of India's top portals for various categories pertaining to plant lifestyle, from planters to fertilizers to seeds to garden tools. Today, it is present in 16 cities and, through quick commerce alone, sells 5,000 plants every day. "Right now, the gardening market in India is close to \$9 billion (approximately Rs 78,000 crore), of which the landscaping business that comprises public infra, huge developments and gardens make up \$5 billion (approx Rs 43,334 crore). The gardening market, where people are actually buying plants, fertilizers, machinery and garden tools, among others makes up \$4 billion (approx Rs 34,667 crore)," Bhalinge says.

"This financial year, Ugao will close at close to Rs 100 crore. We see our sales growing about 40 to 50 per cent year on year. So, our plan over the next five years is to cross the Rs 500-crore mark as there is a huge market that is yet to be organised," the founder-CEO adds. A few days ago, Ugao opened a 5,000 sq ft store in Koregaon Park, a testimony to how far the company has travelled and how much more it aims to cover.

Bhalinge comes from a family that created one of India's oldest vegetable seed companies, the 140-year-old Namdeo Umaji Agritech India, which — with its 200 nationwide distributors — reaches a market that mostly comprises rural and commercial farmers. "I was always at the farm and was exposed to new technologies in seeds. My father had introduced hybrid papaya and hybrid chili to India," says Bhalinge. He went to the US to study landscape architecture and "that's where I learned the value that plants had to people's lives". Bhalinge loved design and could understand plants well. So, when he returned to India, it hit him how the industry was disappointing in terms of specialised gardening stores. "Many people were going to agriculture stores and buying jugadu products. It was very unorganised. I also felt that the way the plants were presented could be better. In the West, I had seen big box stores that made it easier for people to adopt plants and select the right kind of plant. I saw that, in India, an experience had to be built," he says. Though the company launched in December 2015, it spent the first three years educating consumers on the right kind of indoor plants, where to keep them, which were the



low-light plants, which were semi-shade plants and which flowering plants could be grown inside, rather than focus on sales. As trust built, the company noticed that millennials had begun to buy plants from them, though, today, the older generation also makes up the customer base.

"We are now building the new-age consumer or the next generation of consumers who prefer buying plants online for the sake of convenience. I also feel the local nursery does not give them adequate knowledge and quality is not consistent," he says. Ugao's ethos is to use science and present a finished product. The company has a 25-acre nursery in Talegaon, where they grow almost 2 lakh plants a month. But customer enquiries are coming in for more than plants. "We have launched a garden machinery segment as well as our new store. We have lawnmowers, chain saws and so on. It was for this reason that we needed a larger space and Koregaon Park was ideal. We are planning to hold a lot of workshops, at least one every week. We are going to have these plant swaps and gardening meetups. The entire third floor is reserved for events and anything related to plants," he says.

A new challenge has come in with rising temperatures. Bhalinge points out that it is difficult to believe that we are only in March. Climate change has impacted consumer behaviour as well, especially in the north, where people stop buying indoor plants because they fear these will perish in the heat. But more people want knowledge about living with plants. "Wherever construction is happening and new flats or offices are coming up, that is where we do well.

Ahead of SAD membership drive, Akal Takht Sahib acting Jathedar invites 5-member reorganisation panel for meeting

GNS News Agency, March 20

northwest delhi The five-member panel, which has the support of rebel Akali leaders, had gathered at the Akal Takht Sahib on Tuesday to launch its membership drive. A day after Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) working president Balwinder Singh Bhunder extended a call for unity to rebel Akali leaders, Sri Akal Takht Sahib acting Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj on Tuesday invited the party reorganisation panel for a meeting. The five-member panel, which has the support of rebel Akali leaders, had gathered at the Akal Takht Sahib on Tuesday to launch its membership drive. "You have been here today as part of the committee that was formed by the Sri Akal Takht Sahib on December 2. You have been invited for tea at the secretariat of Sri Akal Takht Sahib by Singh Sahib Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj. There, Singh Sahib will discuss the ongoing issues with you. Therefore, you are supposed to meet Jathedar Sahib before leaving," reads the letter from the Akal Takht secretariat.

On December 2 last year, the Sri Akal Takht Sahib had ordered a religious sentence for Sukhbir Singh Badal and other senior Akali leaders for the alleged mistakes committed by the SAD government between 2007 and 2017. A seven-member committee was also formed to reorganise the Akali Dal by initiating a membership drive and making arrangements for the election of its top leadership within six months. Later, two of the panel members resigned. The

SAD had refused to cooperate with the panel citing legal issues. After the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC) removed all three jathedars — Giani Raghbir Singh, Giani Harpreet Singh and Giani Sultan Singh — who had formed the committee from their respective posts, there had been no communication between the Sri Akal Takht Sahib and the five-member panel. It was also alleged that the new Akal Takht Sahib acting Jathedar Gargaj would sabotage the panel. Hence, his invitation to the panel comes as a surprise to many. The letters were delivered to the panel members when they reached the Akal Takht Sahib for prayers before starting the membership drive. Harjinder Dhama to resume duties as SGPC chief. Meanwhile, a day after the SGPC rejected his resignation as president of the apex gurdwara body, Harjinder Singh Dhama announced Tuesday that he will be resuming his duties. "I have been requested to join back. I take it as an order from the community and will join the SGPC as president in the coming days," he said. Dhama's announcement came after Bhunder and Sukhbir Badal visited his home on Tuesday with the request. Dhama had resigned last month after the then Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh openly criticised the SGPC's decision to sack Takht Damdama Sahib Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh from his post. On Monday, the SGPC's executive committee unanimously decided to "reject" Dhama's resignation and appealed to him to resume his duties immediately.

In Lebanon, Israeli strikes point to a precarious ceasefire



Hezbollah members in three separate incidents in south Lebanon since March 15. In one of the incidents on Sunday, the Israeli military said it struck two Hezbollah militants "who served as observation operatives and directed terrorist activities". Security sources in Lebanon said five Hezbollah members were killed. The Israeli military said on Sunday that a gunshot hit a parked car in the Israeli community of Avvim, and that the shot most likely came from Lebanon. No one claimed responsibility. In Lebanon, Israeli strikes in two towns on Monday destroyed prefabricated houses brought to the area for people whose homes were destroyed in the war, security sources said.

The U.S.-backed ceasefire agreed in November required Hezbollah to have no weapons in the south and Israeli troops to withdraw as the U.S.-backed Lebanese army deployed into the region. Israel said earlier this month it had agreed to U.S.-backed talks with Lebanon aimed at demarcating the border. It also released five Lebanese held by the Israeli military in what it called a "gesture to the Lebanese president". Hezbollah officials have put the onus on the Lebanese state to liberate the remaining land still occupied by Israel. Still, leading Hezbollah official Ali Damoush said on Friday the group would not give up its arms while there is an occupation. Analysts say Hezbollah will have to think very hard before taking any decision to escalate against Israel, noting that its overland resupply route to Iran was severed by the fall of its ally Bashar al-Assad in Syria and that many of its supporters are homeless because of the devastation caused by the war. "So far, Hezbollah is keen not to respond and to leave the decision to the government and the Lebanese army," said Qassem Kassir, a Lebanese analyst close to Hezbollah.

BEIRUT, GNS News Agency, March 20, As Israel resumes heavy strikes in the Gaza Strip, escalating Israeli attacks in south Lebanon have killed five Hezbollah members in the last few days, according to security sources in Lebanon, underlining the fragility of a U.S.-backed ceasefire. The war between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon marked the deadliest spillover of the Gaza war, rumbling across the frontier for months before escalating into a devastating Israeli offensive that wiped out the group's command and many of its fighters, along with much of its arsenal.

While the ceasefire brought about a big reduction in the violence, each side accuses the other of failing to fully implement it. Israel says Hezbollah still has infrastructure in the south while Lebanon and Hezbollah say Israel is occupying Lebanese soil by not withdrawing from five hilltop positions. The Israeli military has reported striking five

Israeli strikes kill over 400 in Gaza, say Palestinians, ceasefire on brink

JERUSALEM/CAIRO, Israeli airstrikes pounded Gaza, killing more than 400 people, Palestinian health authorities said on Tuesday, threatening the complete collapse of a two-month ceasefire as Israel vowed to use more force to free hostages held by Hamas. The Palestinian militant group, which still holds 59 of the 250 or so hostages seized in its October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, accused Israel of breaching the ceasefire and jeopardising efforts by mediators to secure a permanent truce.

The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said he had told the military to take "strong action" against Hamas in response to the group's refusal to release the remaining hostages and because of their rejection of ceasefire proposals.

The Israeli military described the attacks as a "pre-emptive offensive" aimed at thwarting Hamas' ability to launch attacks against Israel and to rebuild and rearm its forces. It said it targeted "mid-ranking military commanders, leadership officials and terrorist infrastructure" belonging to Hamas. The airstrikes also hit homes and tent encampments housing civilians from the north to south of the Gaza Strip and Israeli tanks shelled across the border line into the enclave, witnesses said.

"It was a night of hell. It felt like the first days of the war," said Rabiha Jamal, 65, a mother of five from Gaza City. "We were preparing to have something to eat before starting a new day of fasting when the building shook and explosions began. We thought it was over but war is back," she told Reuters via a chat app. Netanyahu has vowed to eradicate his old foe Hamas. While the group has been weakened with relentless Israeli bombardment and ground offensives, it is still the dominant force in Gaza. Among those killed in airstrikes on their homes were Essam Addalees, the de facto head of the Hamas government, Ahmed Al-Hetta, deputy justice minister and Mahmoud Abu Watfa, the deputy minister of interior and head of the Hamas-run security services, Hamas said.

Egypt, one of the mediators in the ceasefire deal agreed in January, called for restraint and urged all parties to work towards a lasting agreement. Israel's intense pressure on Hamas came as tensions flared elsewhere in the Middle East, which has seen the Gaza war spread to Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. Israeli media said Israel was opening shelters in multiple areas in commercial hub Tel Aviv to prepare for possible retaliation from Hamas or Yemen.

The airstrikes earned Netanyahu a political boost. Former National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who left the government over disagreements about the Gaza ceasefire, is rejoining the coalition after the resumption of Israeli strikes, a statement said, strengthening Netanyahu's government. The Gaza attacks were far wider in scale than the regular drone strikes Israel has said it has conducted recently against suspected militants, and follow weeks of failed efforts to agree an extension to the truce agreed on January 19.

Witnesses in Gaza contacted by Reuters said Israeli tanks shelled areas in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. Bewildered children sat next to bagged-up belongings, ready to flee north again having returned to Rafah with the ceasefire. In hospitals strained by 15 months of bombardment, piles of bodies in white plastic sheets smeared with blood were stacked up as casualties were brought in. Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said 404 people had been killed in one of the biggest single-day tolls since the war erupted. The health ministry said many of the dead were children, and 562 people were injured. Israel has halted aid deliveries into Gaza for over two weeks, exacerbating a humanitarian crisis. The Israeli military said its attacks would extend beyond airstrikes, raising the prospect that Israeli ground



troops could resume fighting. As Israel launched its operation in Gaza, its forces have pressed on with an operation in the occupied West Bank which the military says is aimed at Iranian-backed militant groups in long-standing refugee camps. Israeli jets have also struck targets in southern Lebanon and Syria in recent days as the military builds on gains it made during months of fighting against the Iranian-backed Hezbollah and during the collapse of the former Syrian regime.

Negotiating teams from Israel and Hamas had been in Doha as mediators from Egypt and Qatar sought to bridge the gap between the two sides after the end of an initial phase in the ceasefire, which saw 33 Israeli hostages and five Thais released in exchange for some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners. With the backing of the United States, Israel had been pressing for the return of the remaining hostages in exchange for a longer-term truce until after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and the Jewish Passover holiday in April. However, Hamas has insisted on moving to negotiations for a permanent end to the war and a full withdrawal of Israeli forces, under the terms of the original ceasefire agreement.

On Tuesday, Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif Al-Qanoua told Reuters communication with mediators was ongoing, and the group was keen to complete the implementation of the original Gaza ceasefire deal. Egyptian mediators said they were surprised by the overnight airstrikes as negotiations a day earlier had been calm and they had not been notified, two Egyptian security sources said. They are now engaged in intense contacts to salvage the ceasefire and return to talks, they said.

Much of Gaza now lies in ruins after the war, which erupted on October 7, 2023 when Hamas-led gunmen attacked Israel, killing some 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies, and abducting 251 hostages into Gaza. The Israeli campaign in Gaza has killed more than 48,000 people, according to Palestinian health authorities, and destroyed much of the housing and infrastructure in the enclave, including the hospital system. Reporting by Nidal al-Mughrabi, Enas Alashray and Yomna Ehab and Nafisa Eltahir in Cairo, Jana Choukeir and Tala Ramadan and Claudia Taniotis in Dubai and Alex Cornwell in Jerusalem; Additional reporting by Jeff Mason in Washington and Olivia Le Poidevin in Geneva; Writing by Enas Alashray, James Mackenzie and Michael Georgy; Editing by Gerry Doyle, Aidan Lewis, Ros Russell. A senior correspondent with nearly 25 years' experience covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including several wars and the signing of the first historic peace accord between the two sides. Alexander has over a decade of international reporting experience. He is currently a senior correspondent in Jerusalem covering Israel & the Palestinian Territories and was formerly in Dubai where he covered the Arabian Peninsula, including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, often writing about foreign policy, security and economic-related issues.

Surfers fall sick as strange foam, dead fish wash ashore 2 Australian beaches

Melbourne: An Australian State closed two beaches after dead fish and an unusual off-white foam washed ashore while surfers reported feeling unwell, officials said on Tuesday. A microalgal bloom created by unusual weather conditions was suspected to have sickened humans and marine life as well as creating the foam that has covered hundreds of metres (yards) of coastline, South Australian Environment Protection Authority principal scientific officer Sam Gaylard said. "It is very concerning," Gaylard told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "It is unusual at this scale. At this time of year, when the weather conditions allow, we do occasionally get isolated blooms, but something of this scale is definitely a little bit unusual," Gaylard added. Waitpinga Beach and neighbouring Parsons Beach, both south of the South Australia state capital Adelaide, have been closed to the public since Monday in response to a "fish mortality

event in the area", the Department for Environment and Water said in a statement. "The beaches will be re-opened as soon as possible," the department said. Dozens of dead fish have reportedly been washed shore. Surfers have been complaining since the weekend of getting sore eyes, sore throats and coughing after contact with the water, said local Anthony Rowland, who surfed at Waitpinga on Saturday. "While we were out there, we started coughing," Rowland said, referring to his surfing comrades. He said he was overwhelmed by the response from other surfers after posting his experience online. "Lots of people reached out - so many people have said they're had exactly the same symptoms," Rowland said. Marine scientists took water samples from the foam, which is a byproduct of the toxic organisms' decay,

Parents of missing Sudiksha Konanki want her to be declared dead



GNS News Agency, March 20

New York: The family of missing 20-year-old Indian student Sudiksha Konanki has asked police in the Dominican Republic to declare her dead, according to US media reports. Konanki, a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States, was last seen on March 6 at the Riu Republic Resort in Punta Cana town. She has gone missing while on vacation in the Dominican Republic and US federal law enforcement agencies are working with authorities in the Caribbean country in the probe into her disappearance. Despite an extensive search, her body has not been found.

Dominican Republic National Police spokesperson Diogo Pesqueira said Konanki's family has sent the agency a letter requesting a declaration of death. The Konanki family did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Meanwhile, authorities in the Dominican Republic have confiscated the passport of the man who is the last person known to have been with Konanki, according to a source close to the investigation. Dominican Republic Attorney General Yeni Berenice Reynoso interviewed Joshua Steven Riibe, over the weekend for more than six hours and the questioning is expected to continue with a local prosecutor, the source said. Riibe is not considered a suspect in the case and has not been accused of wrongdoing. It's unclear why Riibe's passport was confiscated. Since Konanki went missing in the early hours of March 6, Riibe, a 22-

year-old from Rock Rapids, Iowa, and a senior at St Cloud State University in Minnesota, has remained under police surveillance in the Dominican Republic.

He has been taken to the police station for interrogation multiple times, his parents said in a statement. The Konanki family sent a formal letter to authorities, acknowledging there is no suspected foul play involved in Konanki's presumed death after she vanished from a Punta Cana beach in the early hours of March 6. The father and mother also wrote the authorities' probe into the case and noted Riibe, the last person to see the young woman alive, has cooperated with investigators, sources said. Konanki's parents in the same letter said that they understand that certain legal procedures must be followed for their request, but that they are prepared to comply with any necessary formalities or documentation. Konanki, described by her father as an "ambitious" student who planned to study medicine, arrived in Punta Cana on March 3. She travelled with five other female students from the University of Pittsburgh, according to the Loudon County Sheriff's Office. Riibe said he first met Konanki in the hotel when he and his friend introduced themselves to her group. The two friend groups went together to the bar, where they drank until "someone suggested we go to the beach," Riibe said in his interview. In the early hours of March 6, she was seen on surveillance footage drinking with five women and two men in the Riu República Hotel bar. In the video, Konanki is seen wearing a white cover-up as she hugs and talks with her friends. Riibe is seen several feet away, bent over and stumbling on the lawn outside the bar.

Then, at 4.15 am, a surveillance camera captured the group, including Konanki, entering the beach, police said. Just before 5 am, surveillance footage shows five women and one man leaving the beach. Konanki was not among them. During his fourth interview with prosecutors, Riibe described a harrowing attempt to save Konanki after they were jostled by the wave and she got tired of swimming. Authorities in the Dominican Republic have said no one is considered a suspect in Konanki's disappearance. US authorities have said it is a missing persons case and not a criminal matter.

World War II: Women spies who tricked Nazis



Women were hired for spying during World War-II, and were the only ones allowed to take on a combatant role by the British Army. However, many of them have been forgotten

GNS News Agency, March 20

Oxford: If spy films have taught us anything, it's that the people chosen for a career in espionage are special. They are the cream of the crop selected because they exhibit unique skills: high levels of intelligence and certain emotional traits that made them perfect for spying. During the World War-II, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) was a British agency tasked with training spies to conduct espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance in German-occupied Europe and east Asia.

Active from 1940 to 1946, SOE was a pioneering British secret service. This is because it employed civilians, from all backgrounds, including women, which was unusual at a time where most spies were recruited from the army. The women hired by the agency were the only ones allowed to take on a combatant role by the British Army during the Second World War. However, many have been unjustly forgotten. These women were active throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, but most women worked in France. They were not French, but French speakers who tried to pass for local. On paper, this might seem impossible, since being fluent in a language does not make you a spy. SOE recruited prospective agents on the basis of their language skills, and trained most of them in England before sending them into the field. Despite their lack of experience, many SOE women successfully duped German soldiers. Here are some of the simple but effective ways they managed such deception. Emotional control First, women spies sometimes fooled people simply by appearing calm. Irish agent Maureen Patricia "Paddy" O'Sullivan had grown-up in Belgium and was renowned for her daring personality.

In a post-war interview, she described how she avoided a thorough search while carrying compromising documents. O'Sullivan acted confident and friendly to divert the soldier's attention from her bag. As she laughed and joked with the German, he was distracted from making a closer examination. The spies' cool was frequently praised in post-war commendations.

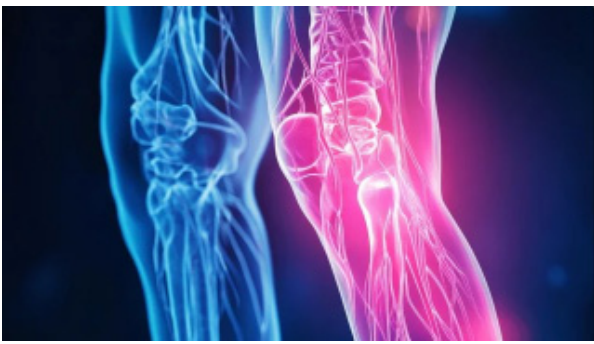
Remaining calm was no mean feat, especially since most SOE recruits had never worked undercover. In France, they could be questioned by Nazis at any time and nervousness made them look suspicious. Agent Yvonne Cormeau joined SOE after losing her husband during a bombing at the beginning of the war. In a 1989 interview, she summarised the situation perfectly: "We learned to live with fear." Physical appearance SOE spies did alter their appearance in order not to be recognised, but for most, this merely involved picking clothes which matched their

cover. Yvonne Cormeau was sent to a farm in southern France, where the pro-Allied owners gave her new clothes and an apron. She was supposed to pass as their assistant and needed to look like one. A few agents went a step further and dyed their hair. This was the case of Noor Inayat Khan (code name Madeleine), a Sufi Muslim of royal lineage born to Indian and American parents. Betrayed to the Germans, she was executed at Dachau concentration camp in 1944. Inayat Khan's contribution to SOE proved invaluable. For several months in 1943, she was the sole radio operator still active in Paris amid the growing Gestapo presence. However, her constant hair dyeing was less effective. To try and escape the notice of the Gestapo, she regularly bleached her hair blonde, but this actually brought her to the attention of the Germans.

They questioned Alfred and Emilie Balachowsky, her contacts who lived near Paris and led a local resistance network, about the presence of a woman "sometimes blonde and sometimes brunette". The agent was not arrested on that occasion, but her efforts had backfired. Locals like the Balachowskys provided crucial support for SOE women, who could be given away by any small gesture.

Despite having grown up near Paris, Inayat Khan threatened her cover just by pouring tea. Shortly after her arrival, Mrs Balachowsky invited neighbours to a tea party, during which the SOE agent poured the milk first into her cup, leading a neighbour to comment that she behaved like a Brit. Emilie Balachowsky quickly corrected Inayat Khan, who was not the only spy to make errors based on cultural differences. While at the farm, Yvonne Cormeau was asked to watch the owner's cows. She was about to bring her knitting kit, until her contact explained that this would give her away. "I was forbidden from knitting, as we Englishwomen knit differently." These anecdotes are a testament to the importance of everyday habits and of the agents' local contacts. For SOE women, espionage in France was very much about teamwork. While Inayat Khan was compromised and executed, for the most part the SOE's civilian programme for women was a success. The SOE paved the way for other agencies which gradually started to recruit civilians of all genders after the Second World War. Some of its methods are also used by modern secret services, such as the illegals programme, a Russian initiative which involves sending Russian operatives fluent in English undercover in the US. Despite this success, the contribution of women like Patricia O'Sullivan, Yvonne Cormeau and Noor Inayat Khan has remained widely overlooked. They deserve to be remembered along with the period's male spies.

Joint pains, arthritis going up in India, says WHO study: Know what's causing them



Why is the study significant?

According to Dr Arvind Chopra, rheumatologist and lead author, "We did not have robust estimates of the burden of arthritis in India. Our study is the best approximation but sufficient for public health and policy planning," he said. Roughly one-sixth of the Indian population suffers from musculoskeletal pain and several million from various forms of arthritis — 4.22 million from rheumatoid arthritis, 54.44 million from osteoarthritis and 17.24 million from soft tissue rheumatism. "The pain was mostly self-managed, and only those with moderate to severe intensity and experiencing difficulty in daily living and livelihood sought organized medical care. The findings should be considered as they make case for launching a national programme of arthritis," he added.

What's causing arthritis in India?

Some risk factors for rising numbers are a rapidly ageing population with degenerative joints, poor knowledge about pain management that delays diagnosis, chronic illnesses like hypertension and diabetes, autoimmune diseases and heavy manual work among those into hard labour. In cities, obesity, sedentary behaviour and poor lifestyle are triggers. "Several inflammatory forms of arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus are autoimmune conditions and are easily triggered by mental stress and infections," said Dr Chopra. "Women also suffer more," Dr Chopra said, adding that an alarming proportion of rheumatoid arthritis was found in younger women under 45. While poor health literacy is a factor, women tend to overlook their symptoms. The survey also listed chikungunya arthritis, joint inflammation triggered by the chikungunya virus, which lasts months and years. The prevalence of musculoskeletal pain was higher in the rural population (20 per cent vs 10.3 per cent in urban areas). Meanwhile, rheumatoid arthritis was 0.34 per cent, undifferentiated inflammatory arthritis was 0.22 per cent, spondyloarthritis was 0.23 per cent, osteoarthritis was 4.39 per cent, gout 0.05 per cent and chikungunya arthritis 1.2 per cent. Non-specific arthralgias, soft tissue pains and degenerative arthritis were dominant disorders. Twelve per cent of respondents reported inflammatory arthritis.

Jamuna Patil, Ravindra Sharma, and Madhavi Kakade (names changed) suffered from severe aches, pains and swollen joints for years before they were diagnosed with arthritis or joint inflammation and pain. Worse, they were misdiagnosed and put on other therapies that did nothing but worsen their symptoms.

Patil, 44, was told her symptoms were indicative of menopause and found she had rheumatoid arthritis — a chronic, autoimmune disease that causes inflammation and pain in the joints — two-and-a-half years later. Sharma, 55, diabetic and overweight, was told he had gout when he suffered from severe knee osteoarthritis (when wear and tear breaks down cartilage in the joints) for seven years that required surgery. Kakade, 22, was treated for rheumatic fever by a local doctor. In three years, her knees deformed and she was finally diagnosed with rheumatic arthritis. She required early knee replacement surgery. These are just a few instances of musculoskeletal pains that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has found in the Indian population. As part of its community-oriented programme for the Control of Rheumatic Diseases (COPCORD), its survey has shown a strikingly high prevalence of musculoskeletal (MSK) pain and arthritis in the Indian population. Published in the International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases, the survey tracked 56,548 people and found that 16 per cent suffered from musculoskeletal pains, the rural population being affected the most. Women were found to be the worst sufferers.

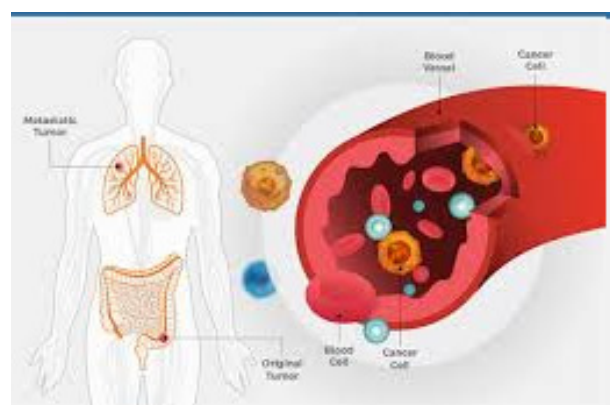
Sitting at home may negate benefits of exercise: How a sedentary worker fixed his heart disease



What does prolonged sitting or any sedentary behaviour do to the heart?

For starters, it slows down blood flow and circulation, allowing fatty deposits to sit in the arteries. It impairs the body's metabolism and ability to process fats, leading to pile-up of low density lipoprotein or bad cholesterol and triglycerides, which accelerate plaque deposition.

Prolonged sitting has been linked to weight gain and the development of metabolic syndrome or a cluster of conditions (high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat and unhealthy cholesterol levels) that increase the risk of heart disease. A sedentary lifestyle can lead to insulin resistance, where the body's cells don't respond effectively to insulin, potentially leading to type 2 diabetes, another risk factor for heart disease. It can lead to high blood pressure, which can damage blood vessels and contribute to plaque buildup. Studies have shown that sitting for many hours day after day is associated with increased coronary artery calcification, a marker of sub-clinical heart disease that can increase the risk of a heart attack. Yet, all of this is avoidable if you keep moving consistently through the day. Just break your rest periods with short burst activity.

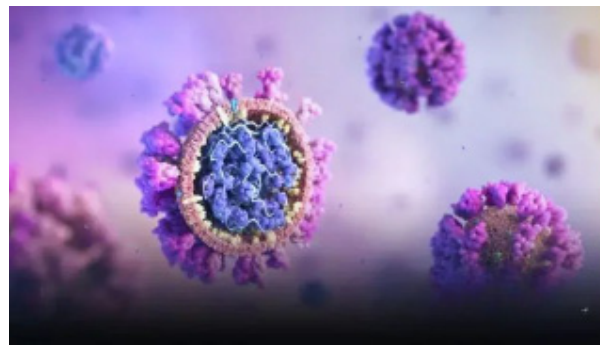


a year, according to data from the Global Cancer Observatory. The most common cancers among men are in the lip and oral cavity (15.6%), lung (8.5%) and oesophagus (6.6%) while for women, they are breast (26.6%), cervical (17.7%), and ovary (6.6%).

Reacting to the Government's initiative, Dr Sushma Bhatnagar, former head of the cancer centre at AIIMS, said, "Not all district hospitals in the country offer chemotherapy or other cancer treatment. If good quality care can be assured through these daycare centres at district levels, it will be a very good way to ensure continuity of care. Many times, cancer patients who come to AIIMS are unable to follow the treatment protocol prescribed by the doctor because they are unable to come back to Delhi." Being a palliative care specialist, she also suggested that these centres should also provide pain management, which is a "low-cost, low-resource intervention". "Nearly 60% to 70% of all cancer patients need pain management and it is easy to provide through such centres," she said.

According to Dr Abhishek Shankar, an oncologist from AIIMS, the medical staff should be trained in managing side-effects as well. "When we talk of starting such centres at district level,

What is human coronavirus detected in a Kolkata woman? Here's all you need to know about this strain



There have been reports of a woman in Kolkata suffering from a human coronavirus or HKU1, a species of coronavirus. However, HKU1 is generally linked to milder respiratory illnesses and is not of pandemic potential. According to reports, the Kolkata patient is now stable. "There are many kinds of coronaviruses. But unlike Covid-19, which was a novel virus when the outbreak happened, HKU-1 was first identified in 2005 as a rare isolate. So you cannot call it a novel virus. Evidence indicates it is evolving steadily in humans, probably the only known reservoir. Most people get infected with these viruses at some point in their lives and these last for a limited duration. So there is no need to panic over it," says Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, senior consultant, internal medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi. "This generally affects the upper respiratory tract, causing symptoms similar to those of the common cold and flu," he adds.

What are the symptoms of human coronavirus?

They are similar to regular flu symptoms. So there is malaise, persistent cough, runny nose or nasal congestion, blocked sinuses, sore throat, fatigue, headaches and fever, usually low grade. In severe cases, the infection can lead to pneumonia or bronchitis. Since it infects cells along the airways, it can descend to the lungs, potentially causing pneumonia.

Who is at risk?

The disease is self-limiting and resolves on its own. But vulnerable groups like the elderly, children, pregnant women, those with immuno-compromised conditions or with co-morbidities need to be vigilant for severe manifestation of the disease.

How does the human coronavirus HKU1 spread?

It spreads like any other coronavirus. It is transmitted during direct contact with the infected person via respiratory droplets (coughing or sneezing), touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face, mouth, or nose.

What are prevention methods?

Just revive the Covid time protocol. Which means follow strict norms of hand hygiene and wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Or sanitise them. This is something we have become lax about. Wear a mask in crowded or high-risk areas. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing or stay away from social interactions when sick. Stay hydrated and get enough rest.

Why ghee, in small doses, is good for your heart and gut

Unlike other saturated fats, ghee stands out as a unique, nutrient-dense food that supports digestion, metabolism and even heart health when consumed mindfully.

Why Should You Include Ghee in Your Diet?

Ghee is a clarified butter made by slowly heating butter to remove water and milk solids, leaving behind pure golden fat. This process enhances its nutritional profile, making it rich in essential fatty acids, fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K) and antioxidants. Unlike heavily processed oils, ghee contains short-chain and medium-chain fatty acids, which provide quick energy and support metabolic functions.

Ghee and Gut Health Ghee is an excellent source of butyrate, a short-chain fatty acid that plays a key role in maintaining gut health. Butyrate nourishes intestinal cells, reduces inflammation in the digestive tract and supports a healthy gut microbiome. It also aids in smoother digestion, making it particularly beneficial for individuals with conditions like acidity, bloating, or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Additionally, ghee enhances the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, ensuring that the body effectively utilizes nutrients from the food we consume. A small amount of ghee with meals can support digestive enzymes and bile production, further improving digestion. It also leads to satiety, taming hunger pangs.

Is Ghee Safe for Heart Health?

A common concern about ghee is its effect on heart health due to its saturated fat content. However, recent research suggests that when consumed in moderation, ghee does not contribute to heart disease. In fact, its unique composition, which includes conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), may help reduce harmful cholesterol or low density lipoprotein



(LDL) while promoting good cholesterol or high-density lipoprotein (HDL). Traditionally, ghee has been used to improve circulation and reduce cell damage. However, the key lies in balance. Excessive intake, especially when paired with a high-sugar or high-carb diet, can lead to weight gain and cardiovascular issues.

How Much Ghee Should You Consume Daily?

The ideal intake of ghee varies based on individual lifestyle, metabolism and dietary habits. Moderation is key: 1 to 2 teaspoons (5–10g) per day for most individuals, ensuring that total visible fat consumption remains within the recommended 20 g per day. For people with existing heart conditions or high cholesterol, it's advisable to consult a doctor before increasing ghee intake. Ghee possesses several bioactive compounds that may contribute positively to health, particularly when consumed in moderation. However, people should be mindful of its saturated fat content and consider existing health guidelines.

Yearly HIV prevention injection shows promise in clinical trial

A yearly injection to protect against HIV is safe and shows promise as a prevention method with long-lasting effects, according to the results of a clinical trial published in The Lancet journal. 'Lenacapavir' was developed by Gilead Sciences, a research-based biopharmaceutical company in the United States, as a pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medication to prevent infection in people at risk of exposure to HIV. It is administered as an injection into the muscle tissue. The drug, which works by blocking HIV from entering and multiplying in human cells, remained in the body for at least 56 weeks, according to the phase 1 randomised controlled trial.

Phase 1 trials assess how a new drug is absorbed and metabolised in a group of 20-100 healthy volunteers, along with its safety. HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, attacks and weakens a person's immune system by targeting white blood cells. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is caused at the most advanced stage of HIV infection. Currently, there is no cure or vaccine approved for HIV/AIDS. The trial included 40 participants, aged 18-55 years, who did not have HIV. Two formulations of the drug were prepared -- one with 5 per cent ethanol and the other with 10 per cent. Half of the participants received the first formulation of lenacapavir, while the other half received the second. The drug was administered as a single 5000 milligram dose.

Samples collected from the participants for up to 56 weeks were analysed to assess safety and drug behaviour. Both formulations were found to be "safe and well tolerated." Pain at the injection site was the most common adverse event, which was generally mild, resolved within one week, and was substantially reduced by pretreatment with ice, the



authors reported. Further, after the 56-week period, the levels of lenacapavir in participants exceeded those in phase 3 trials of a different lenacapavir injection, which is administered twice a year underneath the skin and above the muscle tissue (subcutaneous injection). Results from the phase 3 trials, published in July 2024 in The New England Journal of Medicine, showed that the twice-a-year subcutaneous injection was safe and highly efficacious. "Following the administration of once-yearly intramuscular lenacapavir, median plasma concentrations exceeded those associated with efficacy in phase 3 studies of twice-yearly subcutaneous lenacapavir for PrEP for at least 56 weeks," the authors wrote in The Lancet study. The results indicate the potential of a yearly biomedical intervention for preventing HIV infection, the team stated. However, the small sample size of the study limits the broader generalisation of the results. Therefore, data from a larger, more diverse group is needed to assess the safety of this yearly lenacapavir injection, the authors concluded.

Cancer centre at district hospitals: Trained staff, chemotherapy, 4-6 beds

cancer centres These are the key elements in the blueprint drawn up by the Union Health Ministry for the Government's ambitious initiative to establish cancer daycare centres in all district hospitals

Chemotherapy, counselling services and medicine; four to six beds each; every facility to have an oncologist or a trained medical officer, along with two nurses, a pharmacist, a counsellor and a multi-purpose worker. These are the key elements in the blueprint drawn up by the Union Health Ministry for the Government's ambitious initiative to establish cancer daycare centres in all district hospitals. These details were outlined in a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, tabled on March 12, pertaining to the demand for grants by the Ministry. According to the Health Ministry's submission to the committee, cancer treatment will be made accessible closer to patients' homes after an initial plan is finalised at tertiary care or state centres. Speaking to The Indian Express, experts described the initiative as "a very good way to ensure continuity", especially with many of the at least 764 district hospitals across the country currently not equipped to offer cancer care.

In her Budget speech, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that these centres would be set up over the next three years, with at least 200 centres slated to come up during the current financial year. While the Government proposed that staff for these centres be drawn from the existing pool at district hospitals, the Parliamentary panel recommended "separate" recruitment. "The Committee also desires that separate human Resources (including health professional and nurse) may be provided instead of seeking from the pool of District Hospital for smooth functioning of the centre since there are already scarcity of health professionals in the District Hospitals where such professionals must be made available," the panel report stated. The establishment of such centres comes at a time when the incidence of cancer is on the rise, with one in nine people in the country likely to be affected. India sees over 14 lakh cases and 9 lakh deaths in

Ayush Ministry to evaluate potential of Ayurveda formulation for diabetes

New Delhi: The Central Ayurveda Research Institute (CARI), Kolkata, under the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) of the Ministry of Ayush, on Monday launched a research project to evaluate the potential of an Ayurveda formulation to treat diabetes. CARI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the School of Natural Product Studies (SNPS), Jadavpur University, Kolkata to mark the beginning of a collaborative research project to probe the potential of "Vidangadi Lauham" — a classical Ayurvedic formulation — in the management of diabetes. This research project, to be launched in experimental animals, "holds immense potential in the field of Ayurveda research, aiming to establish a strong scientific foundation for the use of Vidangadi Lauham in diabetes

management," said the Ministry. The research aims to conduct biophysical characterisation and analyse the biological activity of medicinal plants. It will contribute significantly to the preservation and restoration of India's rich medicinal plant heritage. "The findings will be instrumental in developing high-quality, safe, and effective Ayurvedic formulations for combating diabetes and its complications," the Ministry said. Furthermore, the project highlights the need for a comprehensive database to validate the health benefits of medicinal plants, ensuring their credibility in the global healthcare landscape. "The ultimate goal is to popularise Ayurvedic formulations as natural health-promoting agents, fostering greater acceptance of traditional medicine worldwide," the Ministry said.

Sensex, Nifty surge in early trade amid rally in global markets, buying in bank stocks



Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied in early trade on Tuesday in tandem with a positive trend in global markets and buying in bank stocks. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 490.12 points to 74,660.07 in early trade. The NSE Nifty climbed 162.55 points to 22,671.30. From the Sensex pack, ICICI Bank, Zomato, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers. However, Bajaj Finserv and Bajaj Finance were the laggards. Among Asian markets, Seoul,

Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were trading in the positive territory. US markets ended higher on Monday.

"Broad indications are that the market has bottomed out even though further corrections cannot be completely ruled out. Positive domestic cues like rebound on FY25 Q3 GDP growth to 6.2%, spurt in IIP, increase in gross tax collection, declining trade deficit and more importantly decline in CPI inflation to 3.6% are positive macro trends which augur well for the market," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said. But these domestic tailwinds are not strong enough to take the market to higher levels on a sustained basis since the global headwinds from tariff wars will counter the domestic tailwinds, he added.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.25 per cent to USD 71.25 a barrel. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,488.45 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DII) bought worth Rs 6,000.60 crore, according to exchange data. The Sensex climbed 341.04 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 74,169.95 on Monday, snapping its five-day losing run. The Nifty rose by 111.55 points or 0.50 per cent to 22,508.75.

German insurance giant Allianz to sell stake in Bajaj JVs for Rs 24,600 crore

German insurance giant Allianz SE has decided to exit from its Indian insurance joint ventures with the Bajaj group. Nearly one and a half months after the government allowed 100 per cent FDI in insurance ventures, Allianz has decided to sell its 26 per cent stakes in life and non-life joint ventures with the Bajaj group for Rs 24,600 crore. Allianz entered into binding share purchase agreements with Bajaj Finserv Ltd to sell its 26 per cent stake in its successful non-life and life insurance joint ventures – Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company (BAGIC) and Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company (BALIC) – to the Bajaj group for a total consideration of euro 2.6 bn. Allianz may receive the proceeds in several tranches, Allianz said in a statement.



Bajaj Finserv said it would be acquiring from Allianz 11.13 lakh equity shares of Rs 10 each in BAGIC at a price of Rs 4,808.24 per share and 15.22 equity shares of Rs 10 each in BALIC at a price of Rs 2,654.12 per share, amounting to 1.01 per cent equity stake in each of the companies, together with all rights, title, benefits and interest therein, as per the SPAs executed with Allianz. BAGIC had underwritten a premium of Rs 20,472 crore for FY2024. BALIC reported a premium income of Rs 11,492 crore in FY 2024, according to Life Insurance Council data.

With the above acquisition, the company would be holding 75.01 per cent of the total equity share capital in each of BAGIC and BALIC. "Further, after the structuring, it is proposed that Bajaj Holdings and Investment Ltd. and Jannalal Sons Pvt Ltd will acquire approximately 19.95 per cent and 5.04 per cent of the paid up equity capital, respectively, in each of the two insurance companies," Bajaj Finserv said in an exchange filing.

The entire equity share capital in the said two insurance companies will be held by Bajaj Finserv (75.01 per cent) and the promoter entities (collectively 24.99 per cent). In addition, the board in line with the above decision, also approved acquisition of the entire equity stake held by Allianz in Bajaj Allianz Financial Distributors Limited (BAFDL) a 50:50 joint venture with Bajaj Finserv. It would be acquiring 12 lakh equity shares of face value of Rs 10 each in BAFDL for a consideration not exceeding Rs 12.5 crore from Allianz. After the acquisition, the entire share capital in BAFDL will be held by Bajaj Finserv.

"The decision to sell is the result of constructive and amicable talks with Bajaj Finserv Ltd. India continues to be one of Allianz's growth markets, and Allianz will explore new opportunities that strengthen its position in the market and expand its potential to serve not only as an investor but also as an operator," the Munich-based firm said.

"As the proceeds become available, Allianz will consider options for their deployment that support the company's strategic ambitions, in particular the reinvestment of sale proceeds into potential new opportunities in India," Allianz said. Allianz will adhere to its capital management policy as updated at the December 2024 Capital Markets Day, which includes a minimum level of distribution of earnings alongside the flexibility to fund disciplined deployment, it said. The transaction is subject to obtaining necessary regulatory approvals, which are expected to take a number of months. "Upon the transfer of shares and the cessation of Allianz being a promoter of the joint ventures, also the joint venture agreements between Allianz SE and Bajaj Finserv Ltd. will be terminated," it said.

India's trade deficit in Feb drops to \$14 bn; petroleum exports to Europe shrink by 30%



Driven by a steep 30 per cent decline in petroleum exports to Europe and an over 60 per cent decline in gold imports, India's merchandise trade deficit plummeted to a three-year low of \$14.05 billion in February, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday showed.

The sharp decline in petroleum exports, which was the key growth engine of India's exports following the war, comes a month after sweeping US sanctions targeting Russia's oil trade were announced on January 10, placing as many as 183 oil tankers under sanctions. Notably, India's petroleum imports also slipped by 26 per cent, data showed. While exports fell by 10.8 per cent to \$36.9 billion during the month, registering the fourth straight month of contraction, imports plunged by a sharper 16.3 per cent to \$50.96 billion, the lowest since April 2023. However, non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports registered a 5 per cent decline.

"It has been a very difficult year, but looking at the progress, overall exports this year will be more than \$800 billion," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said during a press briefing. "A portion of the year-on-year decline in merchandise exports can be attributed to the base-year effect related to the leap month. The trade deficit was also significantly lower than the average of over \$23 billion during the first 10 months of FY25. Given this print, we now expect the current account to post a surplus of about \$5 billion in Q4FY25, equivalent to roughly 0.5 per cent of GDP," Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA, said. Data showed that chemicals exports were down 24.5 per cent to \$2.2 billion, while gems and jewellery exports contracted by 20.7 per cent to \$2.5 billion. Amid continued restrictions on steel imports, imports in the iron and steel category fell by 23 per cent.

Services exports in February were up 23 per cent to \$35 billion, while imports rose by 8.6 per cent to \$16.5 billion. Services exports in April-February were up 14 per cent year-on-year to \$354.9 billion, while imports increased by 13.3 per cent to \$183.2 billion.

"The big shift in US trade policy threatens to negatively impact global trade. The move has already resulted in many countries taking a protectionist approach to trade. All indications suggest that the US could further harden its

stance on tariffs, which will affect the world adversely. India has been one of the few major countries that has managed to do well on exports despite various back-to-back challenges," Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) India, said. Ashwani Kumar, president of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), said that the dip in exports is primarily due to subdued global demand and ongoing challenges faced by key export sectors, including the impact of the global tariff war. Kumar said that the reduction in the trade deficit is a promising sign of India's trade sector beginning to rebalance. While exports have faced challenges, particularly due to the global tariff war, the sharp decline in imports signals a reduction in demand for foreign goods, presenting opportunities for domestic industries to grow, he said.

Suni Williams, Butch Wilmore on their way back to Earth

Cape Canaveral: NASA's two stuck astronauts headed back to Earth with SpaceX on Tuesday to close out a dramatic marathon mission that began with a bungled Boeing test flight more than nine months ago.

Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams bid farewell to the International Space Station — their home since last spring — departing aboard a SpaceX capsule alongside two other astronauts. The capsule undocked in the wee hours and aimed for a splashdown off the Florida coast by early evening, weather permitting.

Sunday's arrival of their relief crew meant Wilmore and Williams could finally leave. NASA cut them loose a little early, given the iffy weather forecast later this week. They checked out with NASA's Nick Hague and Russia's Alexander Gorbunov, who arrived in their own SpaceX capsule last fall with two empty seats reserved for the Starliner duo.

"We'll miss you, but have a great journey home," NASA's Anne McClain called out from the space station as the capsule pulled away 418 km above the Pacific. Their plight captured the world's attention, giving new meaning to the phrase "stuck at work".

While other astronauts had logged longer spaceflights over the decades, none had to deal with so much uncertainty or see the length of their mission expand by so much. Wilmore and Williams quickly transitioned from guests to full-fledged station crew members, conducting experiments, fixing equipment and even spacewalking together.

With 62 hours over nine spacewalks, Williams set a new record: the most time spent spacewalking over a career among female astronauts. Both had lived on the orbiting lab before and knew the ropes, and brushed up on their station training before rocketing away.

India now exporting railway equipment to Europe, Australia and Saudi Arabia: Ashwini Vaishnaw



From metro coaches to Australia, locomotives to Myanmar and Bangladesh, passenger coaches to Mozambique and Sri Lanka, the Indian Railways' global footprint is expanding as export of rail equipment have surged, Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said in Parliament on Monday. He said that India is supplying other rail equipment as well such as propulsion system and bogie or underframe to multiple European countries.

"Today, from our country, the metro coaches are being exported to Australia. The mechanical structure below the locomotive and coaches, which is called bogie or the underframe, is being exported to United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, France and Australia. Along with this the propulsion system, an important part of power electronics, is being now exported to France, Mexico, Romania, Spain, Germany and Italy. It is a matter of great pride," said Vaishnaw during a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on Railways Budget.

He further said that passenger coaches are being ex-

ported to Mozambique, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Similarly, Indian locomotives are being sent to Mozambique, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Vaishnaw also announced that locomotives manufactured at Marhokra factory — a public private partnership (PPP) mode production unit in Saran district in Bihar — will be exported in near future. "In the near future in Bihar, the Marhokra Factory, which was announced by Lalu Yadav (as then Railway Minister) and it got the momentum after Narendra Modi took charge in 2014, will export more than 100 locomotives soon. Thus, Made in Bihar locomotives will go around the world," said the Minister in Rajya Sabha.

Recently the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways also desired that Indian Railways should expand its business operation in exporting of rail components to enhance revenue without making any compromise on fulfilling of indigenous demand for rolling stock. In 2022, Indian Railways supplied one 3000HP diesel electric locomotive, manufactured at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) Varanasi, of Rs 30.59 crore and 58 passenger coaches & five diesel electric multiple unit (DEMU) sets (each DEMU set comprising of six coaches), manufactured at Modern Coach Factory, Raebareilly, of Rs 293.32 crore to Mozambique. In the same year, Railways exported 40 broad gauge passenger coaches to Sri Lanka at a cost of Rs 164.77 crore. These coaches were manufactured at Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai. In 2023 too, Railways exported passenger coaches to Mozambique for over Rs 120 crore. The Railway Minister stated that in FY25, Railways will transport 1.6 billion tonnes of cargo, making it one of the world's top three freight carriers, alongside China and the USA.

PM Internship Scheme a 'national cause', more companies need to chip in: Sitharaman

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has called on more companies to participate in the PM Internship Scheme (PMIS), citing larger national interest. Now, in its second round — still at the pilot stage — the scheme has drawn internship postings from 327 companies, up from around 280 in the first round.

Announced in the Union Budget for 2024-25 last July, the scheme aims to provide internships to one crore youth in top 500 companies over five years. "In this second phase, more industries have come forward. I appreciate the industry's readiness to come forward and offer positions, but for a country of our size and with the objective that the top 500 companies participate, we still have some way to go," Sitharaman said at the launch of the PMIS mobile app on Monday.

"I would appeal to the industry to make sure that the rest of them, beyond those who have come forward, should also participate. This is a national cause. Nobody is expecting you to cut your profits. Nobody is expecting the industry to face loss. The government is chipping in money," she added. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs 4,500 will be provided per month by the Government of India to selected candidates through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), with an additional Rs 500 offset to be provided by the company's CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds. In the first round of the pilot, which was conducted between October and December last year, over 1.27 lakh opportunities were posted and over 82,000 offers were made to successful candidates. The number of candidates who accepted internship offers was lower than expected in the first round, with just around 8,000 taking up offers till February 6, The Indian Express had earlier reported.

In the second round, which began in January, around 1.18 lakh internship opportunities are up for grabs, spread across 735 districts. The application window for the second round will close on March 31.

"We need to give confidence to our youth... I would think Indian industry should participate in the larger interest of this country, use that demographic dividend which exists, so that their productivity and future can be better endured with our youngsters going there," Sitharaman said. Now, with the launch of the PMIS mobile app, users can also take advantage of the referral program recently announced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. "The referral program would enable the registered youth to refer other eligible candidates for the scheme and win rewards. The registered youth on the PM Internship portal (web browser) can also participate in this referral program," a note by the ministry said.

Farmers struggle to sell mangoes due to lack of market in Mancherial

Mancherial: Mango farmers are struggling to sell their produce following lack of marketing facilities in the district, one of the largest producers of mangoes in Telangana.

The mango crop is being raised in 17,538 acres in the district this year as against 18,000 acres and 17,000 acres cultivation in 2024 and 2023 respectively. Around 50,000 tonnes of mangoes are expected to be produced this year. Nearly 1,000 farmers from Nennal, Jaipur, Bheemaram, Bellampalli, Thandur and Mandamari mandals have been growing the crop in orchards for many decades.

The industrially-developed district is known for producing over 60 varieties of mango fruits including Banganapalle, Kala Mamidi, Dasher, Totapuri, Goa, Panchadara, Cherukuram, Malgova, Jishan, Mallika, Sundari, Himayat, Neelam etc.. The value of the mango fruit production is assessed to be Rs 200 crore per annum.

Farmers of the fruit crop, however, are facing inconvenience due to lack of marketing facilities in the district. They are registering poor profits in raising the crop. They stated they were now forced to depend on markets located in Hyderabad and Nagpur of Maharashtra to sell the produce by shelling huge amounts on transportation and shelter. Madhukar, who raised the mango crop in his 4 acres of farm, hired a vehicle to sell the produce weighing 20 tonnes in Nagpur of Maharashtra. He opined that he could have earned more profit if a market was set up in the district.

He stated that depending on the far-flung markets was affecting their profits and requested officials to ensure marketing opportunities in the district. Officials said that a market was sanctioned for the convenience of the mango farmers in 2015, but it was yet to become operational. They



The ministry has also taken steps to enhance access to the scheme in the second round. "The dashboard of the PMIS Portal has been simplified, made more user-friendly, and greater details of the opportunities and roles offered have been provided. Officials from the MCA, state governments, and industry partners interacted with the youth at more than 80 outreach events held at various educational institutes, such as colleges and Rozgar Melas," the note added. In the first round, Sitharaman said the process was automated, transparent, and designed to be inclusive. "The system was very clearly supportive of all the proactive provisions in the Constitution, so that nobody is missed out. People who needed that additional support were given. The reservation policy was also introduced into it. But the companies were given a shortlist, through which they could choose who they wanted to. There was no compulsion on the industry, no interference in their management process," she said.

"As much as possible, through the system itself, every intern applicant was tried to be placed in the area from which he came. Literally within the district, if not, the neighbouring district. No one was expected to get out too far, unless they chose to go far," she added. Under the scheme, the government also provides a one-time grant of Rs 6,000 per annum for incidentals to cover miscellaneous expenses incurred by selected candidates during their internship. The internship scheme was a part of the Prime Minister's Package for Employment and Skilling announced in the 2024-25 Budget with an overall outlay of Rs 2 lakh crore. Initially, Rs 2,000 crore was provided to the corporate affairs ministry for the ongoing financial year. In the revised estimates for 2024-25, the amount allocated for the scheme was scaled down to Rs 380 crore. For 2025-26, an amount of Rs 10,831 crore has been provided in the Budget, including Rs 59.77 crore of capital outlay.



Around 50,000 tonnes of mangoes are expected to be produced in the district this year

stated that due to fund crunch, the facility was under construction. A water purifying plant, compound wall, internal CC roads and a mango cover sheet have been constructed so far. Officials of the marketing department traders were not coming forward to obtain licenses to buy mangoes from the farmers for unknown reasons even as awareness was being created among them.

However, efforts are being made to begin the process of procurement of the mangoes in the district, officials said.

Indian Premier League enters adulthood, its great success being a blend of sports, entertainment and business

When Kieron Pollard used a duct tape on his mouth to protest against the umpires



GNS News Agency, March 20

sons, change of governments, equations of politics, immune to recession, inflation, and pandemic. From the subconscious it has waltzed into the waking consciousness, from summer pastime it has swung into an unshakable obsession. It thrives in popular culture, seeps into everyday conversations, sweeps into prime time television, displaces soap eras on viewership scale, and forces film producers to keep off high-budget films from the IPL window. Even festivals could have been kept aside, had any coincided with the league. In essence, IPL defines the Indian summers. It reflects the country too, its virtues and vices, its stupefying consumerism as well as its unhindered ambition, its expansionist fervour, it's the pop event that most Indians, whatever their beliefs, circumstances, or motivations, can gather around, it caters to their sporting ideals of heroism and popularity. No cultural product unites India as IPL does.

Some would say it symbolises greed—but then it has not pretended otherwise or claimed it's the reincarnation of the Mahatma. After all, it was a concept designed specifically to attract advertisers, cricket reimagined as a billboard, where everything sellable was sold, from sixes and fours, catches and breaks. The popularity is easy to configure in economic terms. The league's brand value is pegged at \$3.4 billion by Houlihan Lokey's 2024 IPL Valuation Study. Its cumulative value shot to \$16.4 billion. In the last team auction in 2022, Gujarat Titans was bought for a staggering US\$ 940 millions, which was roughly \$200 million more than the combined cost of all franchises in the inaugural edition. The costliest franchise is Mumbai Indians, worth \$ 1.3 billion, which is more than Inter Miami FC, the football club Lionel Messi turns up for and the most expensive of all MLS teams. So a league Jasprit Bumrah turns up for 10 weeks is more expensive than the one Lionel Messi appears for ten months a year.

It's the second richest television sport, after the NFL, in the world too. The media rights for the 2023-2027 blocks were dispensed for US\$ 6.1 billion a year. The annual broadcast revenues is on par with top leagues like the N.F.L. (\$10 billion a year), England's Premier League (about \$6.9 billion) and the N.B.A. (\$2.7 billion). It's the six-fold Sony had paid (\$1bn) to broadcast the first ten editions. The astonishing part is that the league has little traction outside the country or in other cricketing nations, unlike the NBA or EPL. None of the teams have any connection globally, apart from expats, but still the sums remain astronomical. The range of advertisers jostling for IPL is a vast and varied spread—a 10-second ad on television costs \$18-19 lakhs. It has veered from the soft-drink and sport-shoe staple to

endorsing dairy, women's beauty products, cooking oil and multivitamin tablets. Investments have begun to pour from overseas. American money has discovered IPL—private investment firm RedBird Capital Partners, which has stakes in Liverpool and AC Milan has acquired a 15 percent stake in Rajasthan Royals. If Americans stop by, can Saudi Arabia be far behind? On cue, Aramco, the largest oil company on earth, has hopped into the show. If the league stands as a metaphor of free-market capitalism—by a mammoth distance the most commercially successful cricketing venture ever—it functions as the democratic, even socialistic, talent spotter. It has mobilised the scouts across the cricketing map, who have unearthed uncut diamonds from unsuspecting places and fast-tracked them to sporting mainstream. Jasprit Bumrah's fragrance would have blossomed and wasted unseen; Varun Chakravarthy could have been designing skyscrapers; Shyarakumar Yadav would have retired as a domestic stalwart.

The IPL 2024 final on Sunday witnessed some unusual scenes, such as Aryan Khan, usually seen with a serious demeanor, laughing and Gauri Khan strictly monitoring and gently scolding Shah Rukh Khan whenever he took off his face mask. Actor Shah Rukh Khan greets the crowd after KKR's victory in the IPL 2024 final in Chennai, May 26, 2024. The ecosystem it has spawned is extensive and pervasive, bolstering a host of associated industries like tourism, hospitality, textile and clothing, ticketing and sporting technology. Stadiums began to hire more hands. Former cricketers were spoilt for post-retirement career choices, they could join the backroom staff, and pick the microphone or start an academy. Or perform all of these. Fantasy gambling leagues have established themselves as a parallel industry; parents are less disruptive of their children choosing sport as a career. The sport alone has seen the mushrooming of similar leagues, at the international, domestic, local and panchayat levels. Other sports copied the models with varying levels of success as well.

As significantly, its staunchest critics have stopped owing every ill in the game to the league. It is far from perfect, suffocatingly showy, but it does get along with the older siblings of the game, even exchanging tricks and tactics. It's not quite the darling of the cricket world, but it does not matter because it is arguably the most powerful (and moneyed) entity in the game. And it is just 18, just an adult, the whole youth stretched in front of it, the best days yet to be. The irony is we would be repeating these same lines on its 100th birthday too. Happy 18, but were you not an adult already? Even though it seems as though you were born yesterday.



The on-field umpires, Richard Illingworth and Vineet Kulkarni, expressed their disapproval and instructed Pollard to cease his verbal exchanges.

GNS News Agency, March 20

During a 2015 Indian Premier League (IPL) match between Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and Mumbai Indians (MI), West Indies all-rounder Kieron Pollard protested by placing duct tape over his mouth.

What happened?

When Chris Gayle opened for RCB, facing a target of 210, Pollard began attempting to unsettle him from the first over. The on-field umpires, Richard Illingworth and Vineet Kulkarni, expressed their disapproval and instructed Pollard to cease his verbal exchanges. Instead of simply stopping, Pollard applied duct tape to his mouth, a gesture more commonly associated with public protests. He maintained this silent protest until he began bowling the final over of the match, at which point he removed the tape. Taping his lips was his way of indicating to the umpires that he would refrain from talking or sledging. When he needed to communicate with a teammate, Pollard briefly removed a portion of the tape, conveyed his message, and then promptly re-applied it. Harbhajan Singh, who was named Man of the Match, was asked for his opinion on the incident. "The umpire told him to stay quiet, so he wanted to ensure he put the tape on his mouth and was quiet. He is a bit of a character. He likes to do things like that. The IPL brings out the best flavors of the West Indies boys, and this was something very different and unique, which was in good taste," the off-spinner said after the match.

'Felt career was hanging by a thread, spent three weeks crying daily'

Will Hardik Pandya lead Mumbai Indians course-correct their shortcomings in this edition of IPL?



GNS News Agency, March 20

Realizing the weight of the moment, Swiatek immediately apologised on court and later took to Instagram to further address the incident. "I expressed frustration in a way I'm not proud of," she admitted, clarifying that she hadn't intended to target anyone but had simply let her emotions get the best of her. She also noted making eye contact with the ball boy to express her regret. Beyond the incident, Swiatek shed light on the broader scrutiny she faces. "When I'm highly focused and don't show many emotions, I'm called a robot—inhuman. But when I express feelings or struggle, suddenly I'm labeled immature or hysterical," she pointed out. "That's not a healthy standard — especially considering that just six months ago, I felt my career was hanging by a thread, spent three weeks crying daily, and didn't want to step on the court."

Swiatek found herself embroiled in a doping controversy last year after testing positive for the banned heart medication trimetazidine (TMZ) during an out-of-competition drug test in August. The news sent shockwaves through the tennis world, but after an investigation, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) ruled that the positive test was unintentional—traced back to contamination in the melatonin she had been using to combat jet lag and sleep issues. "The second half of last year was extremely challenging for me, especially due to the positive doping test and how circumstances completely beyond my control took away my chance to fight for the highest sport goals at the end of the season," Swiatek wrote.

GNS News Agency, March 20

HYDERABAD: A change of guard with Hardik Pandya leading the five-time champions, Mumbai Indians, turned out to be a dismal show as the champion outfit could win only four of the 14 matches in the league phase to finish 10th in the points table in the last IPL season. So, by all means, Mumbai should be looking to change gears and re-discover its wonted form and be a formidable force when the 2025 season commences on March 23.

But the biggest concern is the non-availability of its spearhead and arguably the world's best fast bowler, the 31-year-old Jasprit Bumrah. He is expected to miss the early round matches to the dismay of the Mumbai camp. Bumrah's absence means the workload and the expectations will be very high on left-arm pacer Trend Boult and India star Deepak Chahar in fast bowling with captain Hardik expected to take chip in with the crucial breakthroughs even while ensuring there is a check on runs-flow. With the likes of Rohit Sharma, arguably the best batter in the white-ball format and high on confidence after leading India to the ICC Champions Trophy in Dubai recently, Surya Kumar Yadav, who has the reputation of playing strokes 360 Degrees and the Hyderabadadi Tilak Varma already making waves on the international circuit, it would be an understatement to state that Mumbai hopes to see this big guns fire



on all cylinders if it were to be a force to reckon with. The presence of England allrounder Will Jacks, South African wicketkeeper-batter Ryan Rickleton, New Zealand pacer Trent Boult, and left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner, who led New Zealand to the Champions Trophy final recently, does ensure the needed variety and depth to the squad. The Mumbai camp did suffer two big blows even before the season started with two overseas players Allah Ghazanfar and Lizaad Williams ruled out, forcing it to look to Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Corbin Bosch as replacements. Clearly, Mumbai's fortunes hinge on the form and brilliance of Rohit as he has to lead from the front at the top of the order if the team were to take the fight into the rival camp on any given day and in any given condition.

Post IPL, India A to play two four-day fixtures before first Test against England

Ahead of IPL 2025, fans get a glimpse of RCB superstars at RCB Unbox event

World No. 2 Iga Swiatek pulled back the curtain on her emotional struggles in a raw and revealing social media post on Monday. She opened up about the challenges she's faced in recent months— from a doping suspension to the realisation that reclaiming the World No. 1 ranking this season may be out of reach. She even admitted to enduring "three weeks of crying daily." Swiatek found herself at the center of controversy during her Indian Wells semifinal clash against 17-year-old rising star Mirra Andreeva. Frustrated after losing a point, Swiatek angrily struck a ball, which narrowly missed a ball boy. The crowd responded with loud boos, and social media erupted, accusing her of "poor sportsmanship."



GNS News Agency, March 20

Bengaluru: M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, venue of the home games for Royal Challengers Bengaluru, sported a red-sea look on Monday with the 12th Man Army thronged the stadium in the presence of some of the big names of the team. The air buzzed with excitement as RCB's incredible fans were treated to a carnival as they enjoyed an unforgettable day of fun and frolic alongside their cricketing superstars at the RCB Unbox.

RCB Unbox is an exciting initiative that gives fans an experience like none other — it not only brings them closer to their favourite cricketers but also gives them a top-notch entertainment experience. The proceedings began with the team's open training session and RCB legend Virat Kohli was in dazzling form as he struck a flurry of massive hits into the stands, much to the joy of the capacity crowd.

As the sun began to set in Bengaluru, the players battled it out in a series of fun challenges that had the fans at the edge of their seats. One standout moment came when Nuwan Thushara delivered a toe-

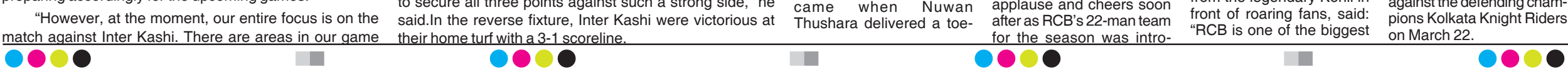
crushing yorker that uprooted the stumps. It wasn't long before Romario Shepherd flexed his muscles as he clobbered two colossal sixes outside the stadium, which drew a massive round of cheers from the full-throated crowd. Led by captain Rajat Patidar, the team then did a lap of honour to applaud their loyal fan base for their undying support and unquestionable loyalty. The enthusiastic crowd were then treated to a high-octane musical extravaganza as Hanumankind, one of India's most popular rappers, put on a spectacle. There was wild applause and cheers soon after as RCB's 22-man team for the season was introduced. The loudest cheers were reserved for Kohli and skipper Patidar. Kohli, who is the highest run-scorer in IPL history, said: "It feels amazing to be back to this amazing city, amazing fans and the excitement and happiness like every other season is high. I've been here for 18 years and I absolutely love it. We have an amazing squad this time around, and a lot of talent. I'm personally very excited to get going for the season ahead."

Patidar, the newly-appointed skipper of the team who received the plaque from the legendary Kohli in front of roaring fans, said: "RCB is one of the biggest franchises in the world and I have the best people around me. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, especially the fans for showing so much love in the past few weeks and accepting me in this role. I'll make sure we do our best and give our everything." Australian DJ Timmy Trumpet closed out the evening with some foot-thumping tunes as RCB's faithful 12th went home a happy bunch with memories to cherish for a lifetime. Royal Challengers Bengaluru begin their Indian Premier League campaign against the defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders on March 22.

Sreenidi Deccan FC takes on Inter Kashi

GNS News Agency, March 20
HYDERABAD: Sreenidi Deccan FC gear up for the final stretch of the I-League 2024-25 when it takes on Inter Kashi at the Deccan Arena here on Wednesday under floodlights.

that we still need to improve, and we have worked on those with dedication. It will be a difficult game against a tough opponent on our home turf, but we are well prepared," he explained. Defender Hardik Bhatt, who has made a name for himself since joining the team in the January transfer window, also shared his thoughts on the team's preparations. "We have had a short but productive break, which has allowed us to be fresh for the final stretch of the league. Inter Kashi are a really tough opponent, and we have to be at our very best, staying focused throughout the game to secure all three points against such a strong side," he said. In the reverse fixture, Inter Kashi were victorious at their home turf with a 3-1 scoreline.



Karan Johar addresses criticism of Ibrahim Ali Khan-Khushi Kapoor's Nadaaniyan, asks for 'sensitivity': 'People they are targetting also someone's son, daughter'



Nadaaniyan has been in the news ever since its debut on Netflix on March 7, mostly for the wrong reasons. The film starring Boney Kapoor-Sridevi's daughter Khushi Kapoor, and Saif Ali Khan-Amrita Singh's son Ibrahim Ali Khan attracted a lot of backlash for their performances. The film was trolled online with many ridiculing the star kids and their acting skills as well as the inept storyline and handling of the film. Now, Karan Johar, who has produced the film under the banner Dharmatic Entertainment, has broke his silence and addressed the criticism of the film. At a recent trailer launch event of a Punjabi film, the producer condemned people's choice of language to criticise the film.

He said, "A critic wrote, 'I want to kick this film'. I have a major issues with these people. I have no issues with the industry, trolls, opinion makers, social commentary. I happily accept people's opinions. In the same way, we have also our Nadaaniyan, Gustakhiyaan, and Gehraiyaan. But, when you write such things in your review, it is not a reflection of the film, it is a reflection of you."

Karan Johar said that these people don't think that the

people they are targeting and criticising are also someone's son, and daughter. He shared, "These intellectual cinema lovers should have a sensitive side because nobody wants to be kicked. Kicking is violence. It is physical violence. When you are not allowed violence in the real world, even words are equally violent. You should be condemned for being violent." Earlier, Hansal Mehta, Vikram Bhatt and Sonu Sood had also defended the star kids and said people are being unfair in many cases. He said people's comments against the film are in "bad taste". "It must be traumatising for the young actors," said Hansal Mehta to ETimes. Vikram Bhatt also said he found no fault with Ibrahim's performance, calling his acting better than father Saif Ali Khan when he started. "I am not able to understand the trolling that the film is facing on social media as I like both the lead actors—Khushi and Ibrahim. I liked Ibrahim, it's a different matter whether the film is good or not. But these days, there is an argument about nepotism, and to win that argument, you have to be superb, but that's not fair for newcomers. It's his first film. Who does superb in their first film? He has a presence in front of the camera, you can tell that he knows acting. So, I am sad about this whole thing," he told Galatta.

Preity Zinta jokes husband is lucky to marry an Indian woman, celebrates Holi with her 'multi-cultural Indian American family'.

Bollywood actor Preity Zinta recently shared a glimpse of her Holi celebration in Los Angeles, USA. She celebrated the festival with her husband, Gene Goodenough, and their twins, Gia and Jai. In the caption, Preity revealed that her family makes it a point to celebrate every festival so their kids stay connected to their roots.

The video montage Preity shared captures her dancing joyfully with friends and family, drenched in Holi colors. She also posed with her children but covered their faces with emojis. A special moment in the clip shows Gene planting a kiss on Preity's forehead, while another highlights a mehendi tattoo on her hand featuring the names of Gene, Gia, and Jai, along with the symbol of Om.

Sharing the post, Preity wrote, "This Holi was everything I wanted it to be. Great weather, excited kids, organic colour, friends, family, yummy food & the best Holi party with gaana bajana (music) (red heart emoji). Being a multi cultural Indian American family we make it a point to celebrate each others festivals & culture, so the kids always know their roots on either side." She added, "I always joke with Gene & say he lucked out marrying an Indian woman, cuz we have so many reasons to celebrate given our ancient heritage n incredible culture. Here's to celebrating the best in us with people that matter the most (two hearts emoji). Thank you so much @stylebyambika for such an amazing Holi party. We had an absolute blast (smiling face with heart-eyes, fire and clapping hands emojis) #holi2025 #desivibes #ting." On the professional front, Preity is set to make her comeback with Rajkumar Santoshi's directorial



Lahore 1947, produced by Aamir Khan. She was last seen on the big screen in the 2018 film Bhaiaji Superhit. Lahore 1947 also stars Sunny Deol in the lead role, alongside Shabana Azmi, Ali Fazal, and Karan Deol in key roles.

Prithviraj Sukumaran reveals Rajinikanth is the first to see Mohanlal's L2: Empuraan trailer: 'I will forever cherish what you said...'

Actor-filmmaker Prithviraj Sukumaran has often spoken fondly about how he received a call from superstar Rajinikanth after the release of the 2007 film Mozhi. In fact, two decades since that phone call, Prithviraj, after becoming a director with Mohanlal's Lucifer (2019), got an opportunity to narrate a script to Rajinikanth and direct him in a Tamil film. However, this project didn't materialise for multiple reasons, including Prithviraj's belief that he wasn't ready with the right kind of script for Rajinikanth. Nevertheless, Prithviraj recently met Rajinikanth and showed him the trailer of his upcoming film, L2: Empuraan. And what made it even more special? Rajinikanth was the first person to watch the much-awaited trailer of the Mohanlal-starrer. Sharing a photo of himself with Rajinikanth, Prithviraj wrote, "The very first person to watch the trailer of L2: Empuraan. I will forever cherish what you said after watching it, sir! This meant the world to me! Fanboy forever!"

Releasing on March 27, Empuraan encountered setbacks due to financial disputes on the producers' end. With Lyca Productions facing issues, Sree Gokulam Movies' Gokulam Gopalan stepped into solve it all, and ensure a



smooth release, as planned. With all the hurdles removed, the cast and crew of L2: Empuraan have kickstarted promotions, and the trailer is expected to be out soon, especially since there are less than ten days left for the release of Empuraan. Starring Prithviraj, Manju Warrier, Tovino Thomas, Indrajith Sukumaran, and Nyla Usha from the first part, Empuraan also has Suraj Venjaramoodu, Abhimanyu Singh, and Jerome Flynn joining the stellar star cast of the film.

Shekhar Kapur calls Netflix's Adolescence 'a truly great series'; Sudhir Mishra says, 'Nobody'll let us make something like that' in India

Adding to the growing chorus of praise for the British crime drama miniseries Adolescence, Indian filmmakers Shekhar Kapur and Sudhir Mishra have also given the show heartfelt endorsements, lauding its exceptional execution. However, while praising the series, both legends lamented the constraints that prevent Indian filmmakers from pursuing similarly ambitious projects. "I'm not the first one to say this but Adolescence from Netflix redefines what a truly great series can achieve. It defies the regular 3-act structure of cause and effect and plunges you deeply into the minds of the characters and allows you to reflect upon yourself. It's next-level storytelling.

Echoing Kapur's sentiments, Mishra, in a quote tweet, observed that such bold storytelling would never be permitted in India. He argued that the only viable path for Indian filmmakers to explore this level of artistic freedom is through independent movies. "Something of our own which wanders, stops, digs and goes where the smell takes us," he noted.

Building on Mishra's point, Kapur questioned whether today's OTT platforms would allow him to make a film like Bandit Queen (1994) under the same creative conditions. He also criticised Amazon Prime Video for censoring and significantly altering Bandit Queen's OTT print without his consent. Condemning streaming platforms for their treatment of Indian filmmakers, he wondered if they would dare to impose similar changes on works by Western filmmakers.

"I wonder Sudhir Mishra if OTT platforms would let me make Bandit Queen the way I made it years ago. Bandit Queen on Amazon Prime is unrecognisable from my film. Someone has cut it beyond recognition. And yet it car-



ries my name as director. And no one asked me! Are we lesser beings than Western directors? Would they have the guts to cut a Chris Nolan film without his permission," Kapur asked.

Starring Stephen Graham, Ashley Walters, Erin Doherty, Owen Cooper, Faye Marsay, Christine Tremarco, Mark Stanley and Jo Hartley Adolescence was created by Jack Thorne and Stephen Graham, and helmed by Philip Barantini. It premiered on Netflix on March 13.

When Shashi Kapoor had Amitabh Bachchan's scenes removed from his film: 'I am not going to let you to do this'

Shashi Kapoor would have been 87 today if he was alive; the actor died at the age of 79 in 2017. He was among the greatest actors of his time and his pairing with Amitabh Bachchan was a fan favourite. The actor-duo collaborated on several films including Deewar, Suhaag, Roti Kapda Aur Makaan, Kabhie Kabhie, and Trishul, among others. Not just on screen, but their camaraderie was also seen off screen. The two were inseparable, and shared a great friendship. The two often spoke about each other in several of their interviews and blogs. This included a time when Amitabh Bachchan was in desperate need of money and had taken the role of an 'extra' in one of Shashi Kapoor films.

On December 6, 2017, a heartbroken Amitabh Bachchan dedicated a blog to his late friend Shashi Kapoor. In the blog he recalled, "Ismail Merchant the producer of the film called us one fine day and said there some small parts which we could do and that he would pay us Rs 50 for it. I needed the money so desperately to feed myself, I readily agreed." He explained the scene was of Shashi Kapoor's death where his body was being taken in procession for cremation. He wrote, "I was asked to be among those that formed the pall bearers along with several other junior artists in the sequence, to carry the body."

"Shashi ji was not at the shoot, obviously, but dropped by later at the location. When he saw what we



had been asked to do, he walked up to me in the crowd of mourners where I was standing as a junior artist, or the 'extra' and asked me to move. 'Don't do these bit parts' he advised, 'you are made for better things'; and then spoke to the director to delete those portions of mine from the film." He recalled, "He once came on the sets of my film Bombay Talkies made by Ismail Merchant. I asked him, 'What are you doing here?' He said he had to say this line and he would get Rs 50 for it. I said, 'Don't be silly. I am not going to allow you to do this. You are destined for better things.' He didn't like it. He wasn't too happy to lose out on the money." The friends turned family after Amitabh Bachchan's daughter Shweta married Ritu Nanda's son, Nikhil Nanda. She was the niece of Shashi Kapoor. Amitabh Bachchan often shares posts remembering his dear friend.

Sandeep Reddy Vanga casts MS Dhoni as Animal, cricketer channels his inner Ranbir Kapoor: 'Behra nahin hoon main'.

Cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni and filmmaker Sandeep Reddy Vanga have teamed up for an advertisement, and the result has left fans in splits. The ad features Dhoni stepping into Ranbir Kapoor's character from Vanga's much-talked-about hit film Animal, but with a humorous twist. In a lighthearted take, Vanga playfully mocks his own film while having fun with the cricketer. The commercial opens with Dhoni recreating Ranbir's iconic entry scene from Animal, where he steps out of a swanky black car surrounded by a gang armed with guns. However, in this spoof, Dhoni is seen carrying an electric bike instead. Despite the hilarious twist, his signature swag remains intact. Vanga, playing the role of the director, watches from behind the camera and praises Dhoni, saying that people will whistle when they see him. This prompts Dhoni to deliver Ranbir's famous dialogue, "Sunai de raha hai mujhe, behra nahin hoon main (I can hear you well. I am not deaf)."

In the next scene, Dhoni rides the electric bike while donning Ranbir Kapoor's Animal look, complete with long hair. Amused by the exaggerated styling, Dhoni questions Vanga about the over-the-top nature of the ad. However, Vanga confidently convinces him to go along with it. What follows is Dhoni recreating another iconic black-and-white



scene from the film's climax, leaving fans thoroughly impressed.

Animal featured Ranbir Kapoor in the lead role and starred Rashmika Mandanna, Bobby Deol, Tripti Dimri, Anil Kapoor, Shakti Kapoor, and others in key roles. The controversial film was a massive box office success, raking in 915 crore worldwide.

Thaman promises a blockbuster soundtrack for Prabhas' 'The Raja Saab'

Chennai: SS Thaman, the hit composer known for delivering viral chartbusters, is all set to create another memorable album for Prabhas's highly anticipated film, "The Raja Saab." Talking about the project's progress, Thaman shared, "We have started composing songs now for 'The Raja Saab'."

Unlike conventional filmmaking where songs are finalized before shooting, "The Raja Saab" has taken a different approach, offering Thaman the creative freedom to revisit his compositions. When asked about his preference for this unconventional process, he explained, "I prefer this process because Prabhas sir is making a comeback with commercial songs after a long time. He has an intro song, a melody, a high-energy dance number, and a love song that

serves as the film's theme." With massive expectations riding on the film's music, Thaman is determined to deliver nothing short of excellence. He emphasized, "The audio company has invested a lot around- 30-40 crore. So, the songs need to connect with audiences across India, including the Hindi-speaking regions. Since Prabhas is returning to a commercial space, I had to put my heart into it. There's no room for anything less than the best." As Thaman pushes boundaries with "The Raja Saab", he's also gearing up for "Jaat", starring Sunny Deol, which is set to hit theatres on April 10. Following that, he's composing for OG, the much-awaited Pawan Kalyan starrer, where he's crafting a powerful soundtrack to match the film's intensity.