INDIAN CHRONICL

CPI MLA exposes lapses in crop loan waiver, opposes sale of UoH land

Hyderabad: In a rare criticism from a Congress ally, CPI MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao lashed out at the State government's faulty crop loan waiver implementation, citing major lapses that left farmers in distress. Speaking in the Assembly, he revealed that at Nidigonda village in Raghunathapalli mandal of Jangaon district, out of 554 farmers, only two received the loan waiver, while 552 were excluded due to Aadhaar discrepancies. Reminding that even Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao admitted the errors, he demanded immediate corrective measures. Sambasiva Rao also strongly opposed the government's decision to sell 400 acres of the University of Hyderabad.

IMD-Hyderabad issues orange, yellow alerts for districts across Telangana till Monday

indicating thunderstorms accompanies with gusty winds, for multiple districts in Telangana State up to next week Monday, even as weather forecasters here have maintained that there are chances of light showers in northern parts of Hyderabad towards Friday night. For the last several days, due to heat wave the average maximum temperature in Hyderabad ranged from 39 degree Celsius to 41 degree Celsius. However, thanks to changing weather conditions, the maximum temperatures on Friday, according to IMD-Hyderabad dropped to 36 degree Celsius, a clear indication of temperatures cooling-off and bringing much-needed respite for general public.

Provide loans at low interest rates: CM Revanth urges NABARD

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has urged NABARD Chairman Shaji KV to consider offering loans at lower interest rates through the RIDF and to approve necessary funding for Micro Irrigation projects. During a meeting at the Assembly on Friday, Shaji KV visited the Chief Minister, who urged him to enhance the support for existing Cooperative Societies and to establish additional new ones. The discussion also focused on strengthening Women Self Help Groups, with Revanth Reddy requesting the initiation of a special program targeted at these groups. The Chief Minister asked NABARD to assist in boosting the milling capacity by connecting IKPs, Godowns and Rice Mills in Telangana State. He directed the officials to ensure that the NABARD funds



allocated for the current fiscal year are utilised by March 31 and to take advantage of all NABARD-sponsored programs in the upfinancial year.Revanth Reddy instructed the officials to utilise the NABARD funds which have been sanctioned in the current financial year by

March 31 and also make use of all schemes sponsored by NABARD in the next financial year. The Chief Minister suggested to link the solar power generation plants sanctioned to the women groups to NABARD and appealed to the Bank chairman to increase rural connectivity in the newly

Panchayats.On the occasion, the NABARD Chairman proposed to the Chief Minister to constitute DCCBs in the districts.Tandur Manohar Reddy and NABARD representatives were also present in the

In northeast, new era of development ushered in after Modi government came to power, says Amit Shah in Rajya Sabha

GNS News Agency, March 21

The government has zero tolerance policy towards terrorism, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday (March 21, 2025) as he also asserted that Naxalism will end in India by March 2026. Replying to a debate in Rajya Sabha on the working of the Home Ministry, he said the Narendra Modi government fulfilled the dream of the architects of the Constitution by abrogating Article 370." Article 370 was the basis of separatism in Kashmir. But I also thank the architects of the Constitution, they made the provision temporary, and the way to abrogate it was also included in the Article," Mr. Shah said. "But due to vote bank politics and stubbornness, Article 370 continued. On August 5, 2019, Article 370 was abrogated. The dream of the architects of our Constitution, was that there can't be two heads, two constitutions and two flags in the country," he said.

Mr. Shah said the issue of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, left-wing extremism, and insurgency in Northeast were among the biggest challenges for India." Around 92,000 citizens were killed in four decades. No organised effort was done to deal with these, and the Modi government did it," he said. The Home Minister said the Modi government has zero tolerance for terrorism. He also said the number of deaths of civilians and security personnel in terror incidents has drastically come down, while there has been zero incidents of stone pelting in the Kashmir valley."There has been a 70% reduction in deaths due to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir during Modi government; terror incidents too fell



sharply," he said.Mr. Shah also said grassroots level democracy has been established in Jammu and Kashmir by successfully holding elections in urban and rural local bodies."Around 40,000 government jobs provided during 2019-24 in Jammu and Kashmir, 1.51 lakh self employment created, skilling clubs operational," he said. He also accused previous governments of not taking action against Naxalism. Talking about the Northeast, Mr. Shah said the region is by and large peaceful, and ever since the Modi government came to power, a new era of development has been ushered in. "We have signed about 19 peace accords since 2019, while about 10,000 militants have surrendered in this period in the Northeast," he said.

India crossed a monumental one billion tonnes of coal production: Kishan Reddy



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Union Minister for coal & mines G Kishan Reddy wrote on Twitter that "With cutting-edge technologies and efficient methods, we've not only increased production but also ensured sustainable and responsible mining. This achievement will fuel our increasing power demands, drive economic growth, and ensure a brighter future for every Indian." G Kishan Reddy further wrote "Under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi, India is on its path to becoming a global energy leader." The Minister extended his heartfelt congratulations to the dedicated workforce of the coal sector, serving as the backbone of the nation's energy security. He thanked them for their tireless efforts and commitment that made this milestone possible. PM Narendra Modi tweets on India crossing one Billion Tonnes of Coal Production: A Proud Moment for India! crossing the monumental milestone of one Billion tonnes of coal production is a remarkable achievement, highlighting our commitment to energy security, economic growth and self-reliance. This feat also reflects the dedication and hard work of all those associated with the sector.

Integrating emerging technologies into agriculture for greater profitability: Sridhar Babu

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Minister for IT and Industries Sridhar Babu stated that emerging technologies like AI are being integrated into agriculture to make farming more profitable.

On Friday, a delegation from the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture and other reaserch institutes. led by Asia Head Rebecca Ridder, met the Minister on the Assembly premises. During the meeting, Sridhar Babu elaborated on the government's initiatives to integrate emerging technologies across various industries. He highlighted that around 55 percent to 60 percent of the state's population depends on agriculture and agro-based industries for their livelihood. The Minister emphasised that technology can address many challenges faced by farmers and that more innovations are needed to benefit them. Sridhar Babu mentioned that, similar to advancements in other countries, "Agri Robots" capable of performing farming activities with minimal human intervention would soon be a reality in India.He revealed that research and development in this area had already begun. The Minister also assured that the government would support companies and individuals introducing innovative solutions to reduce farming costs and enhance farmers' benefits. He further emphasised collaborating with the German government to promote technological advancements in agriculture. The event was attended by Dr. Sebastian Bose, Martin, Sven, Dr. Raghu Chaliganti, Professor Janayya (Vice Chancellor of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University), Dr. Balaram (Research Director), Dr. Ramulu (Director of International Programs), and Dr. Balaji Naik (Director of Digital Agriculture), among others. (NSS)

KCR family has brought dishonour to Telangana : Seethakka

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): In a strong reaction to MLC Kavitha's allegations that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was tarnishing the reputation of Telangana, Minister for Panchayat Raj Seethakka asserted, "The KCR family has brought dishonour to Telangana. "She further questioned, "Are you not the ones who have compromised the dignity of Telangana with your dealings in Delhi?"Seethakka emphasised the Congress party's legacy of sacrifices, con-



BRS's reputation for corruption. She remarked that although the BRS held power for a decade, they failed to serve the people justly throughout that time.The Minister

highlighted specific grievances, stating, "In the initial five years, there were no women Ministers or representatives on the Women's Commission. The Rs.1,800 crore Abhaya Hastam funds, generated by women, were not allocated, and no interest was paid. Moreover, the Rs.3,700 crore owed to women's groups was also unpaid. Numerous issues arose that reflected the injustice inflicted upon the populace during the BRS administration. "Seethakka remarked that if the BRS government were performing effectively, there would be no reason for the people to reject the party in the Assembly elections. She urged BRS leaders to reconsider their approach and offer positive and constructive recommendations at this time. (NSS)

Owaisi says KCR's role in Telangana's growth cannot be ignored

Agency, March 21

Hyderabad: AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi emphasised the need to acknowledge the role of former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao and the previous BRS administration for Telangana's unprecedented growth over the past decade. He pointed out now Telangana had surpassed national averages in GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) and per capita income growth.

Speaking in the Assembly during discussion on the State budget on Friday, Owaisi said the State budget had grown from Rs 1.06 ernance, we would not have



lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 3.04 lakh crore in 2025-26. "We must appreciate all leaders who contributed to Telangana's progress over the years.

Κ But without Chandrashekhar Rao's gov-

surpassed the national averages and achieved this level of economic growth," he said.Owaisi also took Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka to task for not raising his voice against the Centre's failure to release pending funds

accused the Deputy Chief Minister of remaining silent despite mounting financial pressure on Telangana due to pending central allocations. He urged the Congress to act, stating that it was "high time Bade Bhai (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) comes to the rescue of Chote Bhai (Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy) and ensures justice

in fund allocations".

Telangana. "While BJP leaders aggressively attack

the Congress in the As-

sembly, Bhatti Vikramarka

has remained silent on the

Centre's denial of rightful

funds. Questioning the

Centre is not just a political

need, but a responsibility,"

he said.

An error that turned into terror: Harish Rao describes Revanth Reddy in power



GNS News Agency, March 21

Hyderabad: Exposing the hollowness of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's claims of an economic slowdown in the country affecting Telangana's growth, former Finance Minister T Harish Rao pointed out that Telangana was registering negative growth rate in different sectors while neighbouring States were witnessing a positive growth. This was not because of an economic slowdown, but because of the Congress government's failure, he said, adding that the people of Telangana had made one error, that of electing Revanth Reddy, and that error was turning out to be a terror for them. Speaking during a general discussion on the budget in the Assembly on Friday, he pointed out that as per the CAG report, Telangana recorded only a 5.5 percent growth rate in GST collections in the last 11 months. This was against the State government's expectations of 20 per cent growth rate, he said pointing out that at the same time, Karnataka had registered a 10.72 per cent growth rate and Maharashtra 12 per cent while the national average was about 10 per cent. During the BRS tenure, the GST growth rate in Telangana was never below the national average, he

Similarly, the Stamps and Registration revenue had also declined drastically during the Congress rule. In the last budget, Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka had expected the stamps and registration revenue to be Rs 18,244 crore, but in the last 11 months, only Rs 12,867 crore was generated, the former Minister said. Interestingly, the neighbouring Tamil Nadu registered 90 per cent of the ex-

pected revenue, Karnataka 85 per cent and

Maharashtra 93 per cent. Telangana had registered only 77 per cent and the Congress government needs to self-introspect in this regard, he said.Regarding automobile sales, while Andhra Pradesh witnessed a 12 per cent increase, Tamil Nadu recorded a 32 per cent rise and Karnataka of eight per cent, while Telangana recorded a negative growth rate of 0.08 per cent, he pointed out. "Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy came up with the Telangana Rising slogan. In which sectors is Telangana Rising?" Harish Rao asked. Listing out the reasons for Telangana's sluggish growth, the former Minister pointed out that soon after coming to power, the Chief Minister had declared that the State had gone bankrupt. The Pharma City project was put on the backburner, plans for connecting the Hyderabad Metro to the international airport were canceled and demolition of houses on River Musi banks was taken up while the imposition of the 'RR' tax laid the path for negative growth, he said."To cover up their failures, the Congress government is citing 'ardhika mandyam' (economic slowdown) but it is 'buddhi mandyam' (lack of intellect) that is leading to Telangana's negative growth," Harish Rao said, triggering opposition from Speaker G Prasad Kumar, who wanted the senior BRS MLA to refrain from using such language. Bhatti Vikramarka also found fault with the former Minister for his language in criticising the Treasury benches.In reply.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Trump's Ukraine strategy puts Europe in a bind

The dramatic mineral deal between the US and Jkraine evokes a famous quote from American attorney and President Nixon's political adviser, Charles Colson: When you have them by the balls, their hearts and minds vill follow". This is a time when Ukraine is fighting for its urvival, and powerful nations, particularly the US under Donald Trump, are primarily focused on its natural reources, prioritising their own material interests stemming rom the outcome of this conflict. This is not just a deal but nore of a war, politics and a global power shift.

While the Trump Administration's efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine War swiftly are seen as a welcoming step he US President's underlying agenda to acquire Ukrainian minerals under the guise of resolving the conflict is eing criticised globally. The post-Ukraine scenario will ncourage countries worldwide to pursue nuclear rogrammes. Given the current geopolitical vulnerability of Ukraine, the post-Ukraine world order will further disourage nuclear disarmament, allowing nuclear powers ike North Korea, India, Israel and Pakistan to continue etaining their nukes at any cost.

A famous proverb, "With great power comes great esponsibility", originally coined by French author Voltaire out popularised by the Marvel Comics hero Spider-Man, eminds us of another well-known quote by the 16th US President, Abraham Lincoln: "Nearly all men can stand dversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give im power". In light of Trump's unilateral materialistic dication and the Ukrainian mineral deal, the recent heated exchange between President Trump and President relenskyy has once again brought this quote into the spot-

ACDS hosts graduation ceremony of BDS & MBS students



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Army College of Dental Sciences (ACDS) hosted the 19th Graduation ceremony for Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) and Master of Dental Surgery (MDS) students. The students received their degrees from the chief guest Jishnu Dev Varma, Governor of Telangana. The ceremony was attended by faculty, distinguished guests, and the graduates' families and friends. Major General Ajay Misra, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Telangana & Andhra Sub Area (TASA) and Chairman ACDS commended the graduates for their academic achievements and their readiness to contribute meaningfully to the dental profession. Dr Mamta Kaushik, Principal, ACDS presented the college report, emphasizing the college's legacy of excellence and its vital role in shaping future leaders in the field of dentistry.

The ceremony also included the conferring of awards and medals to the top-performing students who had excelled academically and in extracurricular activities, the "Patron's Rolling trophy, Dakshin Bharat Area" for overall best MDS student was awarded to Dr Surabhi Bhadauriya from the Department of Periodontics. Dr Teressa Gregory bagged "Chief of Army Staff Rolling Trophy" for best all-round student and Dr Sarah Raheel was awarded the "General Officer Commanding-in Chief Rolling Trophy" for best BDS student in academics. ACDS has long been a beacon of excellence in dental education, and is the only college in the twin cities to consistently feature in NIRF ranking with NAAC 'A' grade accreditation, being one of the top dental colleges in the nation. With a strong commitment to service, ACDS continues to make a meaningful impact by enhancing the health and well-being of the community. (NSS)

GITAM' MBA granted **NBA** accreditation



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): GITAM Deemed to be University has announced that Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme at its School of Business, Hyderabad Campus, has been granted accreditation by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA), New Delhi for a period of three years, till June 30, 2028.

The milestone marks a significant achievement for GITAM, as it is the first NBA accreditation received by the university since attaining Deemed-to-be University status in 2007. The recognition underscores the institution's commitment to academic excellence and high standards in business education. Prof. R Raja Prabu, Director of IQAC and Accreditation & Ranking, and Prof K. Manjunatha Chari, Deputy Director, extended their heartfelt congratulations and sincere appreciation to the MBA faculty and accreditation teams at the Hyderabad Campus. Their relentless efforts and dedication played a crucial role in securing this esteemed

Expressing their delight over this accomplishment, senior leadership at GITAM, including Vice-Chancellor Prof. Errol D'Souza, Registrar Prof. D. Gunasekaran, Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof. D.S. Rao, Resident Director DVVSR Varma, and Director of the School of Business Dr. Divya Kirti Gupta, commended the teams for their unwavering commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement. (NSS)

Godrej Jersey Unveils 3x3 Strategy for FY26: Focus on Three Hero Categories, Alongside Household Penetration, Market Expansion, and Product Innovation



Hyderabad: Godrej Jersey, a leader in the dairy industry down South, today unveiled its bold 3x3 Leapfrog Strategy for FY26. This forward-thinking initiative aims to expand the company's product range, drive higher market penetration, and enhance consumer experience through continuous innovation. By focusing on three core products-Badam Milk, Paneer, and Curd—Godrej Jersey is positioning itself to become a dominant force in the dairy valueadded portfolio. The three primary objectives of the strategy are:Increase Household Penetration: Growing trials for our "value-added product" portfolio in Andhra Telangana (APT) Market Expansion: Boosting the reach of Badam Milk and Paneer across regional markets in Andhra Telangana (APT)Product Innovation: Prioritizing continuous innovation, particularly in value-added products (VAP), to meet evolving consumer preferences. Bhupendra Suri, CEO of Godrej Jersey, shared, "As we look towards FY26, our growth strategy is anchored in the sunrise categories. The 3x3 Leapfrog Strategy will enable us to accelerate market expansion, enhance our consumer offerings, and drive sustainable growth through continuous innovation, strategic investments, and targeted partnerships. Additionally, we aim

to significantly increase our market share by expanding our value-added products (VAP) portfolio, reinforcing our leadership in the southern dairy market. With these strategies in place, Godrej Jersey is poised to achieve a milestone of INR 1,000 Cr in topline revenue in Telangana within the next two years, fuelled by our market penetration, product innovations, and deepened consumer engagement."The brand is also set to enhance its marketing investments, incorporating next-generation marketing strategies to accelerate growth. This includes leveraging high-profile celebrity endorsements, with renowned actor Rana Daggubati for Badam Milk and celebrated chef Teja of Vismai Foods for Paneer portfolio, to amplify Godrej Jersey's market presence and reinforce brand recall across key consumer segments. Rana Daggubati, Indian Actor and Film Producer, who has been roped in as the face of Godrej Jersey Badam Milk, remarked, "I'm excited to join the Godrej Industries Group as the brand ambassador for Godrej Jersey Badam Milk. Made from real milk, this product is naturally rich in protein, calcium, and essential Vitamins A and D, making it the perfect combination of health and taste. What truly excites me is Godrej's unwavering commitment to trust, quality, and authenticity—values that resonate deeply with me. This TVC is very relatable and mirrors my own fast-paced lifestyle. In today's busy world, all we seek is a refreshing break, and Godrej Jersey Badam Milk is the perfect companion for a hectic day." Godrej Jersey is revolutionizing the packaged paneer market with its new product packaging, offering an unmatched combination of exceptional texture and rich taste. Designed to stay super soft and intact during cooking, the product addresses one of the most common concerns among South India consumers - How to cook tasty paneer dishes. A single-use 200 gms convenience package features a QR code that provides access to various tempting, easy to cook paneer recipes by chef Teja.

Niva Bupa Launches 'Rise' for India's "Missing Middle"

Hyderabad: Niva Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited (Formerly known as Max Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited) - one of India's leading standalone health insurers has unveiled 'Rise'—a health insurance plan designed to make quality healthcare more accessible for India's 'Missing Middle." With several industry-first features that deliver value and flexibility, 'Rise' is set to redefine affordability and accessibility in health insurance.

'Rise' has been designed after comprehensive consumer immersion with consumers in the middle class segment residing in both large and small cities of India to understand their lifestyle, needs and preferences. The interactions revealed insights that people in this cohort have seasonal income and are looking for tangible benefits to manage their health due to lack of good primary private health care. Based on these insights, Niva Bupa has created an affordable and customised health insurance product which offers not just comprehensive coverage to customers but also provides them the option to choose whether they prefer to get treated in a private network hospital or a government hospital. This, coupled with unlimited digital consultations and an option to pay premium as per their convenience makes 'Rise' a perfectly suited health insurance plan for this customer segment.

In India, the "missing middle" population, as defined by the NITI Ayog report published in October 2021, refers to individuals who earn too much to qualify for governmentsponsored health schemes but too little to afford premium



of a private health insurance. This segment, comprising of nearly 40 crore Indians, which includes a significant portion of the middle class, is particularly vulnerable in times of medical emergencies, as they face the financial burden of high healthcare costs while lacking adequate coverage. Without access to affordable health insurance, many individuals in this group resort to depleting their savings or borrowing to cover medical expenses, leading to long-term financial instability. Expanding access to affordable health insurance for the "missing middle" is essential for improving healthcare outcomes, preventing medical debt, and fostering economic stability in India. 'Rise' is intended to bridge the gap of inadequate coverage for India's "missing middle" with unique customised benefits to especially appeal to this customer segment.

Birthday Celebrations of KP's 21st Century IAS Academy Chairman Mr. P. Krishna Pradeep



The birthday of Mr. P. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of KP's 21st Century IAS Academy, Hyderabad, was celebrated with enthusiasm at the academy's campus in RTC cross roads. Musheerabad MLA Muta Gopal and his son Muta Jaisimha graced the occasion, extending his heartfelt wishes for Mr. Krishna Pradeep's long and prosperous life.

Directors of the academy—Mr. Bhavani Shankar, Mr. Varun, and Mr. Dhana Venu—also conveyed their best wishes. The celebration was attended by the academy's team, including Mr. Hari Krishna Goud other faculty members, who expressed their gratitude and appreciation for their chairman's contributions to the field of education and civil

We are cancelling the land allotted to 3 hotels



He said that In the last five years, they have fought a lot for the sanctity of Tirumala. We said that we would start the purification from the Venkateswara Swamy temple after coming

to power. Permissions were given to Mumtaz, Emaar and Devalok hotels adjacent to the hill and 35.32 acres were allotted. We are cancelling these allocations. No one can do business or defile the seven hills. We request everyone working in TTD to take a step forward to protect the sanctity of Venkateswara Swamy but not to act for personal gain," he said . He also said they had made a commitment to

protect the properties of Venkateswara Swamy in the country and the world. Naidu made it clear that Those working in TTD should be Hindus and added that they would give opportunities to people of other religions at other places as a matter of respect. "There will be no people of other religions in Christian and Muslim temples either. The temples of any religion will be

inhabited by people of that religion. We have decided to build a temple of Lord Venkateswara Swamy in all the state capitals of the country. For this, we will write letters to the Chief Ministers of all the states. We will build temples of Lord Venkateswara Swamy in areas where there is a large Hindu population in the world," said

South India Drives Nearly Half of JSW MG Motor India's Total EV Sales in CY24



Hyderabad :JSW MG Motor India, country's leading electric carmaker, announced that nearly half of their EVs sold in CY2024, were driven by the South India market. According to VAHAN, the company retailed a total of 22,646 units across India, with 10,698 units sold in South India

Karnataka emerged as the highest selling EV state for JSW MG Motor India followed by Telangana and Kerala during this period. Such impressive sales numbers, highlights the strong market presence and increasing customer trust on MG EVs in these states. JSW MG Motor India's EV portfolio continues to cater to a wide spectrum of cus-

JSW MG Motor India Sales Info

All India Total EV sales

22,646 Total Sales in South India

10,698

South contribution

The MG Windsor starts at INR 9.99L + Battery-as-a-Service @INR 3.9/km and has captivated car buyers in India with its overall pricing and packaging. As a result, it has emerged as the best-selling EV in India, since launch. The MG Comet starts at an attractive starting price of INR4.99L + Battery-as-a-Service @ INR2.5/km and is India's street-smart car, enabling customers to beat the traffic with style. This stylishly engineered car features a futuristic design with enhanced convenience and advanced tech features. The MG ZS EV is India's first pure electric Internet SUV, starting at INR13.99 Lakh + Battery-as-a-Service @ INR 4.5/km. The MG ZS EV comes with a 50.3kWH advanced battery pack that covers 461km* in a single charge. It is equipped with a powerful motor that delivers the bestin-class power of 176PS and accelerates from 0 to 100 km/ h in just 8.5 seconds. The flagship electric SUV comes with a prismatic cell battery which has a high energy density that offers better range and life.

No plans to impose toll on rural, State roads: Komatireddy



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy shared positive news for motorists in Telangana State. During a discussion on the Budget in the Assembly on Friday, he emphasised that the government has no intention of introducing tolls on rural and State roads. "The State government will cover 40 percent of the payments owed to contractors who have bid for and are undertaking road construction projects. Moreover, the link roads connecting each village will be upgraded to

double lanes, enhancing connections between mandals in each constituency," he stated. Komatireddy accused the previous BRS government of neglecting road development

Telangana, asserting that roads were primarily constructed in only Sirisilla, Siddipet, and Gajwel Assembly constituencies. He further challenged anyone to present evidence of road construction taking place in other areas during the BRS administration. (NSS)

No proposals to increase electricity tariffs:

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Musharraf Faruqui, the Chairman and Managing Director of the Telangana Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TGSPDCL), has announced that there are currently no plans to

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public at large that my client namely Sri Kotnak Kosha Rao S/o. Kotnak Lachu R/o. H.No 1-90, Keslapur, Adilabad presently residing at Adilabad Town that he has lost his Original Sale Doct. Nos.5383/2010, 1204/2018 and Agreement of Sale cum GPA Deed Doct. No.2741/2016 Pertaining to Plot No. 69 measuring 30 x 60 = 1800 Sft Sy.nos. 56/1, 56/2, 56/3 & 56/4 while he was proceeding on Motor Cycle to a Xerox Center at Ramnagar, Dasnapur, Adilabad and inspite of his search it was not traced out.

My client has lodged a complaint with PS Mavala for tracing out the same but it was not traced out and the Police have issued a Certificate on 20.03.2025 through mee seva that "On receipt of the Complaint efforts were made to trace out the missing Title Deeds, but could not be traced". Hence the Notice is given to general public at large that if anyone has found the said document, they may contact the undersigned within (7) days of the publication of this Notice and nandover the same. If the said documents are not traced and if no such information is received withir (7) days then the documents will be reated as lost and non recoverable and if any claim or objection received thereafter on that

documents will be not considered. Hence this Notice.

Adilabad Dt.21.03.2025

SANJAY KUMAR VAIRAGARE **ADVOCATE** Yamuna Vihar, H.No.14-15

Plot No. 21, Kailasnagar, CM raise electricity tariffs this Adilabad. Chandrababu Naidu. (NSS) Mobile No: 9440064412

Chandrababu offers prayers at Tirumala



Tirumala, March 21 (NSS): Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu offered prayers in Tirumala temple along with his family on Friday. On the occasion of the birthday of his grandson Nara Devaansh, the Chief Minister along with his wife Bhuwaneswari, his son and Minister, Nara Lokesh, daughter-in-law Nara Brahmani and grandson Nara Devansh offered prayers to Sri Venkateswara Swamy inside the sanctum sanctorum.

Earlier, he reached Mahadwaram along with his family through Vaikuntham Queue Complex. He was offered the traditional Isthikapal welcome at the main entrance by temple priests while the TTD Chairman BR Naidu along with the EO Syamala Rao and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary welcomed the Head of the State and his family.

After Darshan of Srivaru, the CM was offered Sesha Vastram of Swamy Varu and later the Vedaseervachanam by the Vedic scholars was offered at Ranganayakula Mandapam. The CM and other dignitaries were offered Srivari Theerthaprasadams, lamination photo of Srivaru, Agarbattis, Panchagavya products, dry flower technology photo of Srivaru and Sri Viswavasu Nama Panchangam. After the darshan of Tirumala temple, Chandrababu Naidu visited Matrushri Tarigonda Vengamamba Annaprasadam Complex along with his family members and rendered Annaprasada Seva to the devotees. On the occasion, the birthday of his grandson, he donated the Rs 44 lakh for oneday Annaprasadam requirements of devotees at MTVAC in Tirumala through online. While serving Annaprasadam, he interacted with the devotees over the facilities being provided by TTD and on the taste of Annaprasadams. Later, the CM and all his family members had Annaprasadam

SCR Conducts Inspection of Karimnagar – Ramagundam – Warangal – Kazipet Section

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway (SCR) undertook a detailed inspection of Karimnagar — Ramagundam — Warangal — Kazipet section of Secunderabad Division on Friday. He was accompanied by Bhartesh Kumar Jain, Divisional Railway Manager, Secunderabad Division and other senior officials from both the Headquarters and Division throughout the inspection.

Arun Kumar Jain commenced the inspection at Karimnagar Railway station, wherein he reviewed the passenger amenities and circulating area. He also reviewed the progress of on-going redevelopment works at the station undertaken with a cost of Rs. 25.89 crores as part of Amrit Bharat Station scheme (ABSS). He examined the safety procedures and guidelines being followed while carrying out construction works. Further, he carried out a rear window inspection from Karimnagar to Ramagundam section, wherein he reviewed the safety aspects of signals and maintenance of tracks. The General Manager inspected Ramagundam Railway station. He examined the passenger amenities, circulating area, station master's office and station records. He also reviewed the redevelopment works undertaken at the station as part of ABSS with a cost of Rs.26.49 crores. Further, the General Manager carried out a detailed inspection of Warangal Railway station, he reviewed the passenger amenities, facilities, waiting hall and



also interacted with the passengers at the station. He also visited the Rail coach restaurant at the station and interacted with the customers. Further, he reviewed the progress of on-going redevelopment works at the station undertaken with a cost of Rs. 25.41 crores. He observed the safety precautions and procedures being followed as part of the construction works. Later, Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager along with senior officials held a safety interaction session with the crew members at Kazipet. The General Manager interacted with the Loco Pilots, Assistant Loco Pilots and Loco Inspectors at Kazipet and enquired about the working environment and reiterated on safety quidelines.(NSS)

YSRCP leader Shyamala gets relief in HC in betting apps case



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): YSR Congress leader and anchor Shyamala got relief from the Telangana High

Court today. It is known that a case was recently registered against Shyamala at the Punjagutta Police Station in Hyderabad for promoting a betting app. Shyamala approached the High Court regarding this and challenged the FIR registered against her. In her petition, she stated that the FIR registered against her should be quashed.

After hearing the arguments of both the parties, the HC ordered the police not to arrest Shyamala until further orders. With this, she got a big relief. At the same time, the High Court ordered anchor Shyamala to cooperate with the investigation officers. It has been clarified that she will appear before the police for questioning from Monday. The Telangana High Court has stated that the investigation can be continued by giving a notice. Cases have been filed against social media influencers in the case for promoting betting the apps along with Shyamala. It is known that the police questioned anchors Vishnupriya and Ritu Chaudhary at length on Thursday in this case. (NSS)

Don't be greedy for money, Narayana advises film industry

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): CPI national secretary Dr K. Narayana has advised the film industry not to give publicity to betting apps that destroy the youth for the sake of earning money and commercial advertisements that spoil the society. He suggested that the sacred medium of art should be used only in useful ways for the development of the society.

Responding to the case registered by the Madhapur and Panjagutta police in Hyderabad against some film personalities who promoted the betting apps, Narayana strongly condemned the use of the fame gained through the film industry to commit immoral acts out of the obsession with making money. Speaking to media persons at Andhra Bhavan in Delhi, the CPI leader alleged that the lives of the youth were being ruined by promoting the betting apps. In the past, people like Allu Ramalingaiah have used art for the development of society. He expressed his anger over those who earn a regular income in the film industry acting in many unethical advertisements that mislead the society for more income. He criticized the statement of one person that they promoted betting apps without their knowl-

edge and another that they did it because there was a legal opportunity. He also said people easily believe the things you act on and promote due to your popularity and are seriously troubled by it. He clarified that it was not a crime to continue promoting betting apps even though incidents of thousands of youth falling victim to them are coming to light. He opined that the government should take strict action against this matter. Narayana said they were harming the society by acting in the advertisements for gutka, paan spices, real estate and fraudulent gold businesses. He recalled that film hero Chiranjeevi responded to his comments made during the Coca-Cola company's previous ad and announced that he would no longer do such ads. He said there were many loopholes in the laws and added that the US President Trump had openly stated that he was avoiding many cases based on loopholes in the law. He said there was an occasion when a judge ruled that gutka was also a food item in our country. However, he clarified that morality is more important than law and money. He also said the film industry should stay away from all types of commercial advertisements that are harmful to society.

Centre acting against spirit of federal system: Jupally

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Minister for Tourism Jupally Krishna Rao has expressed concerns that the Union government is undermining the principles of federalism and providing inadequate support to Telangana regarding fund allocations. During a debate on the Budget in the Legislative Assembly on Friday, he addressed points raised by BJP MLA Maheshwar Reddy regarding the Musi rejuvenation project.

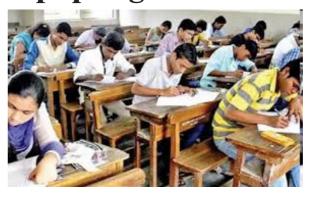
Jupally Krishna Rao highlighted that while significant funds are being directed to states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat, Telangana is receiving only a minimal portion of the tax revenue. He emphasised that the central government is exhibiting bias by failing to distribute funds in line with the taxes contributed by the state to the Union."There is a necessity for the central government to

take responsible action regarding the national status of the Musi rejuvenation initiative, as well as the Kaleshwaram and Palamuru-Ranga Reddy projects and other development activities," Jupally said.

The Minister emphasized the pressing need to restore the Musi River, which has become highly polluted, and to safeguard it from the unpleasant odors and mosquito issues associated with it. He noted that he himself has been affected by these conditions.

He further elaborated that the Musi Rejuvenation project will be implemented to enhance the lives of those impacted by the river's condition, attract investments, create job opportunities for the unemployed youth, boost state revenue, and foster tourism. (NSS)

SSC exams start from Friday, wrong paper given to students delaying exam



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): The 10th Class examinations have started in Telangana State today. However, the negligence of the authorities was revealed on the first day of the exams. The exam started two hours late a wrong question paper was given. Another paper was immediately brought and the exam was written. This incident took place in Mancherial district.

The 10th class exams started almost two hours late at the ZP Boys High School exam centre in the district headquarters. All the students reached the exam centers in the morning. They sat in their allotted seats in the exam hall. They got ready to write the exams. The invigilators there gave the question paper to the students. However, all the students were taken aback when they saw the question paper. They were a little scared, wondering what it was. The officials distributed another paper instead of one question paper. The officials were shocked when the students identified it and told them. The students wrote the exam almost two hours late as another paper was brought in a hurry. However, the matter of the tampering of the question paper came to the attention of the Collector. With this, the Collector became serious about the negligence of the staff regarding the question papers and the delay in the exam. As another paper was received instead of the real question paper, the Collector issued orders to the DEO to immediately conduct an investigation and submit a report. There is widespread criticism of the negligence of the officials regarding the question papers of the tenth grade exams. (NSS)

Telangana has a debt of 8.8 lakh crore: BJLP Leader

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS):BJP Legislative Party Leader Aleti Maheshwar Reddy today said Telangana's debt was Rs 8.8 lakh crore. He criticized the Congress government for borrowing more than Rs 1700 crore per day. He spoke during the debate on the budget in the Assembly in the city. Speaking on the occasion, he claimed that the Congress government was borrowing more than Rs 1 crore per minute. "The debt burden on each person in the State is Rs 2.27 lakh. How can Telangana develop if there is a large amount of debt? The Finance Commission funds increased during the NDA regime compared to the UPA regime. During the UPA regime, States had a 32% share of Central taxes. Then, their share of Central taxes was not increased by even 2 to 3 per cent.

After the Modi government came to power, they increased their share of the Central taxes by 10% to 42%. It is not right to criticize the Centre even after increasing the

share of taxes," he said. Reddy also said the promises made were being violated by the government. Stating that the people thought that if Telangana comes, their lives will change, he said the State had become a pile of debt. Stating that the previous government borrowed lakhs of crore in ten years, he accused the previous government of wasting funds by going for big things. He also accused the Congress of not investigating the corruption and irregularities of the previous government for 15 months even after coming to power.Reddy claimed that the State government was looking to increase the State's income through the sale of government lands and liquor. "Revenue expenditure and capital expenditure are equal now. It is not a good governance and welfare government, but a government of commissions," he alleged while wondering whether the Telangana model mean commissions, demolitions and eva-

Harish Rao slams govt over budget



Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): Former minister Harish Rao has come down heavily on CM Revanth Reddy and deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, who promised to fill two lakh jobs per year as soon as the Congress party came to power. "It has been over a year since the Congress party came to power. Where are the two lakh jobs," Harish Rao asked. He spoke during the discussion on the budget in the Legislative Accomply.

He said Bhatti Vikramarka's budget had poured wa-

ter on the hopes of the unemployed. "Those who said two lakh jobs in the first year showed their stubborn hands to the unemployed youth now. Bhatti sprinkled buckets of water on the hopes of those who were waiting to see if they would not give them any job this year. Before the elections, from Revanth to Rahul Gandhi, they circled around Ashok Nagar. Rahul Gandhi tweeted that he would keep his promise by giving jobs. What did he do? He provoked people by organizing bus tours to every village. He turned the unemployed into his party workers and took them from house to house. He made them believe then, but today he has drowned them," alleged Harish Rao. He claimed that CM Revanth Reddy spread misinformation that the BRS government did not give a single job, "The government that fulfilled the goals of the Telangana movement, funds, water and appointments, is ours. Why did the Telangana movement come about? What did Telangana fight for from Mulki Rules to 610'GO? Local jobs should go to the locals. Former CM KCR achieved the presidential orders to procure 95% of the jobs to Telangana youth," he said. He demanded a conditional apology for misleading the House and deceiving the women's world by not fulfilling the promises made to them.

MLC Kavitha attacks govt over its debt claims

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): BRS party MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha today said Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was lying about the State's financial situation just to blame former CM KCR. She said the Chief Minister would get a Guinness record for lying. "If the CM and ministers do not stop lying, privilege notices will be given in the House. Congress leaders cheated the people by giving 420 promises, bringing the Gandhi family to sign, giving guarantees and getting votes. Despite all this, the Congress party got only one percent more votes than the BRS party," she said. She also said the people did not reject the BRS party. She said he would listen to the public and came to the program

Even though the CM said he would meet the people every day, the Chief Minister did not want to meet the people and alleged that Revanth Reddy was ruling by sitting in the police command control room. Kavitha said this budget was proof of the Congress party's corruption and cunningness. "Corruption is part of Congress DNA.. Congress government has not prioritized any sector.. Congress government has no vision.. It only governs by cursing KCR.. Even though KCR was cursed millions of times during the movement, they turned into blessings. The Congress party repeatedly spreads bad news about debts during KCR's rule.. The budget has shown that the propaganda being done by Con-



gress party is false.. During the 10-year BRS rule, the debts incurred under FRBM limit were only Rs 3 lakh crore. The amount of guarantees given by BRS government for the loans taken by the respective corporations was only Rs 1,21,000 crores. That means the total debt incurred during BRS rule was only Rs 4 lakh 22 thousand crore. The government itself has stated these figures in the budget documents. Then why does Congress party repeatedly lie about debts?, Kavitha questioned. (NSS)

BRS delegation departs for Southern States Conference on Delimitation

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): A delegation from the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), led by its working president K.T. Rama Rao has departed for Chennai to attend a conference of Southern States scheduled for tomorrow, aimed at discussing the delimitation policy. In this conference, KTR is set to address the current delimitation policy, highlighting the losses it has caused and will continue to cause to southern States, while also proposing measures to rectify this injustice. Under KTR's leadership, a team comprising several senior BRS party leaders will participate in the conference. KTR has warned that the current delimitation policy weakens the representation of southern States, severely impacting these States that play a crucial role in the country's economic development. The BRS, which has consistently opposed this policy from the outset, will elaborate on its stance during tomorrow's meeting.KTR emphasized that the BRS has been at the forefront of identifying and raising awareness about the injustice faced by southern States, consistently informing the public and leading the

fight on this issue. He expressed hope that, following tomorrow's conference, all southern States would unite and stand together for the future of their people, who have paved the way for the nation's progress. The BRS leadership believes that this conference will strengthen the unity of southern States and send a strong message of Opposition to the Central government regarding the proposed delimitation policy. (NSS)

First day SSC exam completes smoothly

Hyderabad, March 21 (NSS): The Day-1 Examination (first Language) of SSC Public Examinations, March-2025 has been completed smoothly on March 21, 2025, in which 2,650 centres were functioning and over 4.95 Lakh students (99.67%) appeared. In this connection, it is to inform that some photographs of question paper are being circulated in WhatsApp to create confusion .

Ranga Reddy **SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE**

How village defence committees in Punjab play a crucial role in border security, drug control, and community engagement

GNS News Agency, March 21

In 2008, the village defence committee (VDC) of the Alam Shah village in Punjab's Fazilka district was established. The village is located about 3-4 kilometres from the Indo-Pak border. The purpose of VDCs is to maintain close coordination with the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Punjab Police to curb cross-border smuggling and enhance security in the area. The villagers have been making independent efforts to stay vigilant regarding border-related activities, and as a result, they have achieved the distinction of having zero FIRs in the village for over two years.

"Our village has about a population of 2,200 and 750 out of these are voters and we are proud that none of us have any police case against us... If, by chance, any minor dispute occurs at times, the villagers resolve it on their own by discussion. Recently, on January 26, our VDC also got the prize of 2 lakh for trying to control the drug menace. We felt really happy, and now the area MLA Narinderpal Sawna also announced a Rs 35 lakh grant for the sports stadium of this village," said Sukhwinder Singh Thind, a member of the Alam Shah VDC. The previous Governor of Punjab, Banwari Lal Purohit, along with the current Governor, Gulab Chand Kataria, visited the border villages of Punjab in 2024. As a result, for the second consecutive year, three VDCs from each of the six border districts of Punjab were awarded prizes. The prize money was distributed as follows: Rs 3 lakh for first place, Rs 2 lakh for second place, and Rs 1 lakh for third place. The border districts involved are Fazilka, Ferozepur, Tarn Taran, Pathankot, Gurdaspur, and Amritsar. Thind said, "Our village received Rs 2 lakh on January 26, and recently, the inspector general visited our village, where panchayat members from over 25 nearby villages were invited. They were told that if we can implement a 'zero FIR', why others can't do the same.

The village has approximately 1,300 acres of farmland, where nearly every villager cultivates at least three main crops. In addition, many residents grow seasonal vegetables, which they load into their cars and sell at the wholesale vegetable market in Fazilka. Wheat, paddy, and moong are the primary crops grown by many farmers in the area. In addition, a few others cultivate wheat, maize, and seasonal vegetables. "The land here is fertile due to the proximity of the Sutlej River, which allows us to achieve good yields... Amanat Kamboj, an international discus thrower from our village, has won many medals," said Thind. The village residents stay away from drugs due to their affiliation with Sirsa Dera and Radha Soami Dera, which guides them to avoid any form of intoxication, Thind said.

Jodha Bhaini is a village in Jalalabad, which Governor Kataria visited in November last year. Its VDC secured first place and received a grant of Rs 3 lakh, as recommended by the Governor. "The committee was instrumental in bringing down a drone and won a prize of Rs 1 lakh for tracking drones involved in cross-border smuggling," Varinder Singh Brar, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Fazilka, told The Indian Express. The Punjab Police announced this prize money in May 2023 for information leading to the recovery of narcotics and drones. However, some sources revealed that the VDCs have a limited role; if the identity of an informer is revealed, they must face retaliation from smugglers, they said. Vikramjeet Singh, the former sarpanch of the Panje Ke Hithhar village in Ferozepur, said, "I am not an AAP supporter, so the AAP MLA for the area did not allow me to attend the district-level function on January 26 to receive a cheque for Rs 2 lakh for our VDC. This money has yet to be disbursed to our village. However, our committee continues to communicate with the local police and the BSF, providing them with information that could lead to the recovery of narcotics. It's a tough task, though. The police should maintain the confidentiality of the information providers, but unfortunately, many do not. Still, I appreciate the Punjab Governor's initiative to honour VDCs. At least it's something, even if it's not much." Ranjit Singh, from the Wan Tara village of Bhikhiwind in the Tarn Taran district, told The Indian Express," I had gone to take the cheque on January 26 at the district-level Republic Day function. We organise sports tournaments regularly in the village, take out rallies against drugs and keep an eye on outsiders. We cannot vouch for no narcotic drugs in our village, but we are making efforts to reduce this menace. This is one of the reasons why the Governor chose our committee to receive

Rs 220 crore for FY 2025-26: Mohali civic body set to increase budget by 30%

GNS News Agency, March 21

The budget for the Mohali Municipal Corporation is likely to increase by approximately 30 per cent for the financial year 2025-2026 compared to the previous year. Last year, the budget stood at around Rs 170 crore, whereas this year, it has risen to nearly Rs 220 crore. A special budget meeting is expected to be held next week, during which the new budget will be formally presented.

Sources close to the development from the municipal corporation (MC) said the highest revenue in this year's budget is expected from advertisements, generating around Rs 27.5 crore. Property tax collections have already reached Rs 42 crore this year, and for the next financial year, this amount is projected to rise to Rs 60 crore. Additionally, Rs 100 crore is proposed to be allocated from the Punjab Nirman Fund in the upcoming fiscal year, sources added. Another Rs 10 crore is expected to come from municipal cess on electricity consumption. Other revenue sources include: building application fees, cattle pound fees, licence fees, water tax, excise duty, rent and lease income, teh bazari (street vendor fees), and slaughterhouse

According to sources, key expenditures of the Mohali civic body for FY26 include: establishment costs (Rs 75 crore), contingency expenses (Rs 7 crore), committed expenses (Rs 76 crore), and non-committed expenses (Rs 58 crore). Breakdown of expenditures committed will cover essential costs such as electricity and water bills, sewerage and street lighting maintenance, promotion of the Punjabi language, advertisements in newspapers, stationery, and computer and telephone bills. Non-committed expenses will include road repairs and construction, installation of new tube wells, upgradation of slip roads, parks, and slaughterhouses, procurement of machinery, and overall park development. With a significant increase in the budget, the Mohali MC is set to focus on infrastructural and urban development. The upcoming budget meeting will finalise the details and approve allocations for various projects

Alumni meet at Chandigarh Sector 16 school brings back memories of cycling to class, stealing guavas



chandigarh schoolThe event rekindled old friendships and brought childhood memories to life, with many reminiscing about cycling to school nearly 40-50 years ago. The alumni meet at Government Model School, Sector 16, turned into a walk down memory lane as former students gathered in large numbers to relive their school days. The event rekindled old friendships and brought childhood memories to life, with many reminiscing about cycling to school nearly 40-50 years ago.

ADGP Sudhanshu Srivastava, posted in Punjab, said it was a reunion of all those who passed their Class X in 1985. "Old teachers and students are here from all over the globe. It feels as if we are school kids once again." Smiles lit up faces as alumni shared stories of their time in school, expressing gratitude towards their teachers for shaping their lives. Several former students, now holding prestigious positions, credited the school's education and values for their success. Music, dance, and an exhibition of old photographs added to the emotional atmosphere. Rohit Sharma, who had come all the way from Melbourne, called it an emotional homecoming. "I came just because of a very heart-tugging video posted by a former schoolmate." He said the school was almost the same. "I remember everything," said Sharma, recalling how he was a "middle-bencher" with lots of friends. "I was moved to tears when I met my science teacher. It's a very memorable occasion for me."chandigarh alumni Smiles lit up faces as alumni shared stories of their time in school, expressing gratitude towards their teachers

Arun Nanda, who works for the ministry of transport in Sydney, recalled his mischievous antics. "I could never understand Maths, and my effort used to be to somehow avoid the class. So one day, two others and I bunked the class and went to pluck guavas from a house nearby. The aunty saw us and sent her dog to chase us. The other two escaped, but I couldn't scale the wall. I remember apologising profusely to her. She made me promise never to repeat this antic. But we were back to our old ways the very next day," he laughed. Anish Kapoor, who was Nanda's partner in crime, wondered how today's students have fun. "In those days, the boundary wall was just four feet high, now it is 12 feet. There were no grills on the windows. We could enter and exit the class at will. Then there was this huge tree in the backyard, behind whose trunk at least four students could hide if they didn't want to attend the class."Sanjeev Mahajan, a Chandigarh resident, said the school still felt familiar. "With my teachers and old friends here, I feel as if I am a child once again. It's a great trip down memory lane."The principal and teachers warmly welcomed the alumni and wished them a bright future. Discussions were also held on the school's growth and future

Omaxe fails to deliver apartment promised in 2019, consumer forum asks it to compensate homebuyer



GNS News Agency, March 21

The State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Chandigarh, has directed Omaxe Chandigarh Extension Developers Private Limited to compensate its homebuyer for failing to deliver possession of a flat in its ambitious housing project, The Lake, despite a delay of over six years. The complainant, Reshma Rani, had booked a flat in the project, located in New Chandigarh, and paid a substantial amount of Rs 94.42 lakh through personal funds and a housing loan. As per the buyer's agreement, the developer was supposed to hand over the flat by February 25, 2019, but failed to do so. After years of waiting and multiple assurances from the developer, Rani filed a complaint with the commission, citing "deficiency in service and un-

During the hearings, Omaxe contended that the delay was due to force majeure (unexpected circumstances) conditions, including legal complications and the Covid-19 pandemic. The developer also contended that the complainant being an investor did not fall within the definition of consumer, she and her husband owned multiple properties. However, the commission, comprising Justice Raj Shekhar Attri (President) and Preetinder Singh (Member), dismissed these claims. It observed that since the due date for possession had passed more than a year before the pandemic, the delay could not be attributed to the pandemic. Additionally, the commission rejected Omaxe's argument that the complainant was an investor and not a consumer, affirming that she was entitled to relief under consumer protection laws. In its ruling, the commission directed Omaxe to pay interest at 9 per cent per annum on the amount paid by the complainant from the original due date until the possession is handed over. The commission ordered the real estate firm to pay to the complainant, compensation of Rs 75,000 for causing her mental agony and harassment, and also cost of litigation of Rs 350,000. It also asked the developer to pay the future pre-EMIs to PNB Housing Finance Limited under subvention scheme till the date of actual physical possession of the unit to the consumer. The commission also ruled that if Omaxe fails to comply with the order within 30 days, the complainant would be entitled to seek further legal action for the recov-

Grief to confession and a prison escape – How Karnataka Police exposed a quadruple murderer hiding in plain sight



GNS News Agency, March 21 In 1994, Karnataka hit the national headlines for a brutal quadruple murder in the quiet village of Vamanjoor, located about 8 km from the coastal town of Mangaluru. Appi Sherigarthi, 70, her son Govinda, 22, daughter Shakuntala, 28, and Shakuntala's daughter Deepika, 10, lived in a small house located on the Mangaluru-Karkala Road. Shakuntala's husband was employed in Muscat. On the morning of February 24, 1994, 12-year-old Revathi visited the Sherigarthi house like other days to supply milk but she got no response to her knocks. After stepping inside the house, the girl witnessed a horrific scene. There were blood stains all around the house, and the frightened girl ran away to share the news with her grandmother. When the villagers rushed to the house, they discovered four members of the Sherigarthi family had been murdered. Jayanth Vasudev Shetty, who was a police sub-inspector in Mangaluru rural police station at the time, recalled, "I reached the spot and found out that Govinda's body was lying on a bed. There was another body next to Govinda. The first impression was that someone known to the family was the murderer because there was no sign of forced entry."Ironically, just days before, Shakuntala's husband sent a letter advising her to take good care of their daughter. But the letter was delivered to the Sherigarthi house on the day he reached Vamanjoor after learning about the murders. Praveen Kumar, a man in his 30s, seemed grief-stricken after learning about the murder of his maternal aunt Appi Sherigarthi and her family. Like other relatives and villagers, Praveen demanded that the police nab the culprit at the earliest. Praveen, a tailor, lived with his wife in Periyadka village near Uppinangady, 56 km from Vamanjoor. "When asked where he was on the day of the crime, Praveen said he was in his village and he, too, would have been murdered had he been at his aunt's place on that fateful night," Jayanth Shetty told . The police did not

suspect Praveen at first. But Praveen slowly came under

the police radar, after they found out that he often visited

the Sherigarthi family. "As we had clarity that someone

known to the family was behind the murder, Praveen be-

came a suspect," Jayanth Shetty said. The police first took Praveen into confidence, claiming that they were seeking information about the suspects. The police took him for lunch in Uppinangady and then travelled towards Mangaluru. When they again asked Praveen where he was on the intervening night of February 23-24, 1994, he told the police that he was at his residence. But by then the police had found out from Praveen's wife that he was not at home that night. Praveen could not fool the police anymore, and by the time he reached the Mangaluru rural police station. he had confessed to the crime. The investigation revealed that Praveen killed members of the Sherigarthi family while they were asleep, as he wanted to get the gold ornaments that they had kept in tiffin boxes at their residence. A police officer who was part of the probe said, "Praveen was addicted to gambling, especially the single number lottery, and he had availed loans from a lot of people. One week before the crime, he had decided to kill the members of the Sherigarthi family and rob their valuables. After the arrest, the gold ornaments he had taken were recovered."While the probe progressed after the arrest of Praveen, he was lodged in the Hindalga prison in Belagavi. In 1997, when he was in judicial custody, he escaped when he was being brought back from the court. A police officer stated that the prison police initially gave false information. They said that Praveen escaped near Mangaluru but, in reality, he had escaped from Dharwad. After the escape, Praveen remained elusive for months. Jayanth Shetty said the Appi Sherigarthi family was disappointed with the turn of events and was putting pressure on the police. As there were no leads on Prayeen's whereabouts, the police department announced a Rs 1 lakh reward for information regarding Praveen. Jayanth Shetty recalled that in 1999, nearly two years after Prayeen escaped, he received a phone call from a person who claimed that Praveen was living near Karwar. "I was receiving hundreds of phone calls (on Praveen) but took all of them seriously. We used to verify the details, and each time the information turned out to be false. But in this particular call, the man gave more details about Praveen,' said Jayanth Shetty. "But the informant had a trust issue." He asked me how he could be sure that the police would reward him. The then SP (superintendent of police) was Kamal Pant and I asked the informant to call after 20 minutes. Later, Kamal Pant spoke to him personally and assured him of a reward if the information was correct," he added. Thereafter, a police team from the Dakshina Kannada district went to a village near Karwar in Uttara Kannada district and arrested Praveen. The police later filed a chargesheet and the principal sessions judge of Dakshina Kannada awarded the death penalty to Praveen on February 4, 2002. Praveen challenged the order and approached higher courts. The Supreme Court also confirmed the death sentence awarded by the trial court. His mercy petition before the President of India was rejected in 2013

5 policemen injured in attack by mob in Bihar's Bhagalpur



GNS News Agency, March 21

The incident happened in Antichak in Kahalgaon subdivision on Saturday night when a police team went there after receiving information about a fight between two groups, they said. This is the third such attack on the police in the state in the last five days. While an assistant sub-inspector died on Saturday after he was assaulted by a group of people in Munger district, another policeman died after a scuffle between the police and a mob in Araria district on

Among those injured in the latest incident were a subinspector, three constables and a chowkidar, officials said."The incident took place when a police team went to investigate a brawl between two boys, which had escalated. One of the boys hurled stones at the team. Following that, locals also started hurling stones," Station House Officer of Antichak Ashutosh Kumar said. "Additional forces were immediately sent to the area and the situation was brought under control," he said. The injured policemen were taken to the nearest government hospital for treatment, he added."The prime accused, however, managed to flee. Local magistrate Sanjeev Choudhary was also present there when the incident happened. Based on the statement given by Choudhary, a case was registered and a search started for the accused," Kumar said.

Hours before this incident, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Santosh Kumar Singh succumbed to the injuries that he received after being attacked by a mob in Nandlalpur village in the Mufassil police station area of Munger district. He was part of a police team that went to the village on Friday after receiving information about a scuffle. He was attacked with a sharp weapon on his head by some men who were drunk. He died at a hospital in Patna on Satur-

26 nakas, 2,927 challans: How cops in Mohali ensured 'smooth' Holi day



GNS News Agency, March 21

The Mohali Police took strict action against miscreants during Holi celebrations by setting up 26 special nakas across the city, particularly in Phase 3B2, where large crowds had gathered. However, as the festivities progressed, some youngsters began causing a nuisance. Around 2 pm, police intervened and instructed them to vacate the market and return home.

inspected checkpoints across Mohali. Authorities ensured that key locations, including Phase 3B2, Phase 7, Phase 2, Phase 1, Phase 10, Phase 11, Sohana, Lakhnaur, Landran, Kharar, and other major points, were sealed to prevent any untoward incidents. As part of the crackdown, the police issued 2,927 challans on Holi. Among these, 1,438 challans were issued for hooliganism and riding without helmets, and 79 vehicles were impounded. Authorities monitored reckless driving, unnecessary honking, and public disturbances. Several individuals were caught violating traffic laws by riding without registration plates and using illegal loud horns and sound systems, contributing to noise pollution and dis-

Punjab CM joins Stalin in chorus against delimitation

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

This is the first time that Mann has spoken against the impending delimitation of constituencies. Responding to a query by the media after sending off a group of teachers to Finland, Mann said, "I have spoken to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin over the phone. He is sending two of his ministers to Punjab. The BJP-led Centre is playing tricks, reducing the seats of states where they cannot win and increasing in the states where they are winning.'

He said it was ironic that while the Centre has a policy of controlling population and keeping the size of families smaller across the country, on the other hand, the number of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies is being increased in those states where this policy is not being followed. "If the number of seats is increased or decreased on the basis of population policy, then it will affect Punjab. Of course, one or two seats will increase in Punjab, but it will not be in the same proportion as it will increase in other states," Mann said.

Stalin had recently written a letter to the chief ministers of non-BJP ruled states and called upon them to formulate a strategy on opposing delimitation. He had also spoken to Mann. Earlier, Punjab Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s chief spokesperson and MP from Anandpur Sahib, Malvinder Singh Kang, had stated that they have similar apprehensions like southern states that the criterion of delimitation will weaken Punjab as "it would affect the representation of Punjab state in the Parliament besides being a threat to India's federal structure." Kang told The Indian Express that as MPs, he and his party colleagues will raise the issue in the next session of Lok Sabha.

Only 26 convicts with appeals pending in SC granted furlough in 10 years, Delhi govt tells HC



GNS News Agency, March 21

In the last 10 years, only 26 convicts whose appeals are pending in the Supreme Court, and are lodged in various Delhi jails, have been granted furlough or a temporary release, the Delhi government has informed the High Court. As of January, 68 convicts have their appeals against their conviction pending before the Supreme Court. Data accessed by shows that one of these appeals dates as far back as 2012 and four other appeals have been pending since 2014. The 26 convicts who could be out on furlough were able to secure a temporary release until a single-judge bench of the High Court in order dated July 3, 2023, held that if a convict's appeal is pending in the Supreme Court, only the apex court can direct the grant of furlough, and not the High Court. The data has been provided by the Delhi prison administration after a court order sought the details in a bunch of petitions by 12 convicts of the Hashimpura massacre. The convicts have challenged the constitutional validity of a prison rule that requires court-ordered furlough instead of executive granting furlough if a convict's appeal

is pending In 2018, a division bench of Delhi HC headed by Justice S Muralidhar reversed the 2015 acquittal of 16 former members of the Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and held them guilty of murder, criminal conspiracy, kidnapping, and causing disappearance of evidence. The convicts were sentenced to life imprisonment. During the 1987 Hashimpura massacre in UP's Meerut, the accused, who were posted for riot control following communal riots, had rounded up around 42-45 Muslim men and taken them away in a truck. They were later shot and the bodies were dumped in the Gang Nahar and Hindon canal. Of the 38 who were killed, the bodies of only 11 were identified by families. The remaining bodies were not recovered. A division bench of the Delhi HC is now examining whether an application seeking furlough would be maintainable before the High Court during the pendency of an appeal against conviction before the SC, or would the convict have to approach the Supreme Court for relief. The division bench is also testing the constitutional validity of the said prison rule which 12 co-convicts in the Hashimpura massacre case are challenging. One of the convicts, Budhi Singh, in March 2022 had challenged an order of the jail authorities by which they had declined to grant him furlough.

The court is specifically examining Note 2 to Rule 1224 of the Delhi Prison Rules, 2018, which reads: "If an appeal of a convict is pending before the High Court or the period for filing an appeal before the High Court has not expired,

furlough will not be granted and it would be open to the convict to seek appropriate directions from the Court."

In an affidavit filed on behalf of the prison administration before the HC on January 22, it has been submitted that the note was included "consciously by the Government of NCT of Delhi taking away the jurisdiction vested in the executive to consider an application for furlough" and that a similar restriction has also been imposed on the release of the prisoners on parole. The rationale, as per the authorities, stems from the Parole/Furlough Guidelines, 2010, which was approved by the then L-G in an order on February 17, 2010. On December 2, 2022, the Delhi HC framed seven issues for adjudication and interpretation of the said rule. A single-judge bench of Delhi HC of Justice Amit Mahajan, in an order in July 2023, had held that the 'high court' in the above provision is meant to imply appellate court, which would then include Delhi High Court as well as the Supreme Court. Justice Mahajan had also held that if an appeal of a convict is pending before the SC, the Delhi HC cannot grant furlough even by exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 226. Four of the seven issues involved dealt with the constitutional validity of the rule, which is now being adjudicated by the division bench

These include whether the rule is in violation of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India: whether denial of furlough, on account of the pendency of an appeal in the Supreme Court of India, despite good conduct earned by the convict, would run contrary to the theory of reformative approach; and whether the jurisprudence on parole can be applied to furlough since furlough does not involve suspension of sentence. On January 8, a division bench of Justices Prathiba Singh and Amit Sharma had directed the Director General (Prisons), Delhi, to file an affidavit giving details of the number of cases in which the prison authorities concerned have granted furlough in the last 10 years with respect of convicts whose criminal appeals/ special leave petitions are pending or were pending before the Supreme Court as of July 2023. The court also sought details of the number of convicts in the respective prisons in Delhi, whose criminal appeals or special leave petitions are pending before the Supreme Court.On Tuesday, advocate Sarthak Maggon, appearing for one of the convicts before the division bench, highlighted that the rule has a differential impact, where convicts whose appeals are pending before higher courts are effectively penalised compared to those whose appeals have been dismissed. Maggon also argued that such a rule may discourage a convict from filing an appeal and "may cause a chilling effect", adding that standards for furlough are distinguishable and distinct. Making submissions on the constitutional validity of the rule before the bench on January 23, amicus curiae in the case, senior advocate Vivek Sood, impressed that the "matter of furlough should be left to the executive wisdom" and that such a limitation for convict-prisoners as imposed in the note 2 of the rule "is liable to struck down". "For (executive grant of) furlough, no lawyers are required, no grounds have to be given and (furlough) is granted in a time bound manner. Whereas, if the prisoner is to file an application (before an appellate court seeking furlough as Note 2 of the rule 1224 provides), it becomes a legal process, lawyers get involved, costly process, time consuming also," Sood had argued in

Ahead of 2026 West Bengal polls, a poster war between TMC and BJP

GNS News Agency, March 21

It started when posters that went up in some parts of South Bengal Monday said: 'Hindu Hindu bhai bhai, 2026 e BJP ke chai (All Hindus are brothers, we want the BJP in power in 2026)'. The poster prompted the TMC — which saw the banner as part of a BJP campaign — to counter with its own: while one said 'Hindu jodi bhai bhai, gas e kyano chhar nai' (If Hindus are brothers, why do people have no relief in gas prices?), another said 'Hindu Hindu Bhai Bhai, Kintu Bangali Purno Mantri Nai' (the Hindus could be brothers, yet there's no cabinet minister from Bengal'). On its part, Debangshu Bhattacharya, the head of TMC's IT cell, said: "BJP is basically saying Hindu Hindu, Bhai Bhai but their prime minister, Narendra Modi, calls (scam-accused businessman) Mehul Choksi bhai. It was our campaign to expose the hypocrisy of the BJP leadership, which talks about Hindutva but renders lakhs of Hindus stateless in the name of the NRC (National Register of Citizens). Bengal knows how to choose between the Hinduism of Swami Vivekananda and that of PM Modi".

Meanwhile, BJP MP Samik Bhattacharya denied that the party had anything to do with the poster. "Some people spontaneously acted and made posters. It was not any political campaign," he said. However, at the same time, he also accused the TMC of "dividing the people of Bengal". "The TMC first tries to project itself as Hindu sympathisers and then bows before fundamentalist forces at Furfura Sharif," he said, referring to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's visit to Furfura Sharif — a Muslim religious pilgrimage in Hooghly district – Monday. A day later, the chief minister also participated in an Iftar gathering. When the BJP described these as attempts to consolidate minority votes, Banerjee hit back, saying they were questioning her "true intentions"

The development comes at a time when religion appears to have taken centre-stage ahead of the assembly polls, with each party accusing the other of creating "religious divide". On March 10, BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari –



the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly - claimed that Saraswati Puja was being "obstructed" in the state and sought an adjournment motion to discuss the issue, even leading the BJP walkout when Speaker Biman Banerjee refuse to allow it. During the same Budget session, Adhikari, who was among the four BJP MLAs suspended from the House, accused the TMC government of being "anti-Hindu" and "appeasing" Muslims. The following day, the TMC introduced a privilege motion against Adhikari. Speaking during the session, the chief minister also took on the BJP over the January 29 stampede in the Maha Kumbh, where at least 30 people were declared dead. Calling it 'Mrityu Kumbh' - or the Kumbh of death - she accused the BJP of underreporting deaths."I respect Maha Kumbh, but what they have turned it into is sad. They are saying 30 people died, but thousands of bodies have been swept away ... They have hidden hundreds of bodies to bring down the toll," she said. The comments sparked protests from the BJP, with Adhikari leading a party delegation to meet Governor C V Ananda Bose over it. A day later, Adhikari sparked another row by saying that Muslim MLAs would be "kicked out of the assembly" once the BJP came to power. The TMC condemned the remarks, accusing the principal Opposition of "undermining democratic values" and calling on the BJP MLA to apologise.

HC waives cooling off period for cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal, his estranged wife post divorce plea

GNS News Agency, March 21

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday waived the mandatory six-month cooling off period post filing of divorce plea by cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal and his estranged wife Dhanashree Verma, and directed the family court to decide their divorce plea by Thursday. A single bench of Justice Madhav Jamdar said Chahal would not be available from March 21 as he has to participate in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament. The cricketer and Verma had filed a divorce plea in a family court here on February 5 this year. They had submitted a petition mutually seeking for the cooling off period be waived as their divorce was by mutual consent.

However, the family court on February 20 refused to waive the same. The duo then challenged the family court's order in the high court. Under the Hindu Marriage Act, every couple has to undergo the six-month cooling-off period before they are granted divorce. Justice Jamdar of the high court allowed the petition. "As the petitioner No 1 (Chahal) is



A single bench of Justice Madhav Jamdar said Chahal would not be available from March 21 as he has to participate in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament.

a participant of IPL, the advocate informs that he may not be available post March 21. The family court is hence requested to decide their divorce plea by tomorrow (March 20) "HC said

Rising cases of hypertension reported in Chandigarh: data indicates 50% of residents over 45 years have high BP



GNS News Agency, March 21

According to health experts, most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure, and tend to ignore the symptoms which could prove detrimental. (File Image)According to health experts, most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure, and tend to ignore the symptoms which could prove detrimental. High blood pressure or hypertension is emerging as a rising issue among residents of Chandigarh alongside diabetes which has been viewed as the chief concern among Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) in recent years. According to health experts, most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure, and tend to ignore the symptoms which could prove detrimental. Chandigarh Health Secretary Ajay Chagti, who was part of the foundation day celebrations of the World NCD Federation last week at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, often referred to as PGI, said 35.5 per cent of the adults in the Union territory have high blood pressure, which is more than the national average, and NCD risk factor data has shown that 50 per cent of people above 45 years currently suffer from high BP.

The PGI School of Public Health has been working extensively on the prevention of non-communicable diseases in the region for the last several years. For this, the department maintains data on all diseases so that new initiatives and projects can be started for preventive

measures. Viewed as a silent killer due to its lack of symptoms, consistently elevated blood pressure is one of the major causes of premature deaths across the world, and can lead to stroke, heart attacks, heart failure, kidney damage and many other health issues, according to doctors. Dr Ashok Yadav, Associate Professor of Experimental Medicine and Biotechnology at PGI, Chandigarh, said World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines recommend a daily dietary sodium intake of 2 grams (corresponding to 5 grams of salt), but 65 per cent of people consume 8 grams daily. Excessive salt consumption is believed to be a significant trigger of hypertension.

As sodium levels go up, the body holds onto water to dilute it. This increases both the amount of fluid surrounding the cells and the volume of blood. Increased blood volume means more work for the heart, leading to high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke. This is why cardiologists advise patients to avoid salt-rich food, pickles, sauces, canned soups, processed cheese, frozen meals and, most importantly, table salt. "Blood pressure must be maintained under 140/90 mmHg. Those with diabetes and renal failure should have strict control of blood pressure. Low salt intake, appropriate body weight maintenance and medications control high blood pressure," said Professor Dr Rajesh Vijayvergiya, Department of Cardiology, PGI, Chandigarh.

The Department of Dietetics, PGI, is organising special diet clinics to sensitise people about uncontrolled high blood pressure and its repercussions on kidney health, besides advising them on dietary management. Chief Dietician Dr Nancy Sahni underlined the role of proper hydration, appropriate salt, fruits and vegetable intake and a balanced diet in controlling hypertension. The clinic recently analysed 60 responses received to its survey on diet and nutrition and found that the respondents, whose mean age was 54 years, reported taking their medications irregularly, attributing it to various factors like being unconvinced that BP requires medication (48.6%) and forgetfulness (14.3%). Many (31.4%) stopped medication as they felt their BP returned to normal.

2nd edition of Cinevesture International Film Festival to open in Chandigarh this week

GNS News Agency, March 21

The second edition of the Cinevesture International Film Festival, unveiling an exciting selection of films, is scheduled to take place in Chandigarh from March 20 to March 23. The festival promises a dynamic celebration of global cinema, independent storytelling, and artistic excellence. VS Kundu, the Festival Director, said, "The festival will showcase an eclectic mix of celebrated international films, regional Indian cinema, and hidden local gems from Haryana and Punjab to immerse the viewers in a wide range of cinematic experiences."

It will open with the India Premiere of the acclaimed Korean film which premiered at Toronto International Film Festival, 'A Normal Family' directed by Hur Jin-ho.A special screening of the Punjabi short film 'The Cycle,' by Arpita Mukherjee, set in Chandigarh, featuring the city's own cast and crew will take place at the opening ceremony of the festival. This year's selection showcases Oscar winner 'Emilia Perez', directed by Jacques Audiard (Academy Awards 2025), and the Oscar-nominated film 'The Girl with the Needle', directed by Magnus von Horn (Academy Awards 2025). This year's edition will present 15 award-winning international features in the World Cinema section, and



the India Unveiled category will showcase 17 remarkable indie films. The Punjabi-language film Fathers and Sons, directed by Ankur Singla, will have its World Premiere, while Little Thomas, directed by Kaushal Oza, will make its India Premiere at the festival. A special tribute to legendary filmmaker Shyam Benegal will honour his invaluable contributions to Indian cinema, with screenings of three of his most celebrated films. Some of the film screenings will be followed by Q&A sessions, and engaging conversations with filmmakers.

Police assault on Colonel in Patiala: How the case is similar to the 1992 Army officer attack row that cost Chandigarh SSP his post

GNS News Agency, March 21

The recent attack on an Indian Army Colonel and his son by three Punjab Police inspectors and nine other personnel in Patiala draws strong parallels to the assault of a serving lieutenant colonel by the then-senior superintendent of police (SSP) Sumedh Singh Saini in Chandigarh in 1992. In contrast to the swift action taken by the Army and Punjab government in the 1992 case, the accused policemen in the incident late on March 13 have not been named in the First Information Report (FIR). The Punjab Police on March 18 suspended 12 police personnel for attacking Colonel Pushpinder Singh Batth and his son allegedly with baseball bats and sharp-edged weapons, after the CCTV footage of the act went viral.

Though the Western Command headquarters of the Army released a statement acknowledging the Punjab Police's investigation into the attack, sources in the defence fraternity alleged that no senior Army officer has publicly condemned the incident nor demanded a speedy investigation. Off the record, Army officers at Western Command have indicated that the Army has taken a stern stand, urging the Punjab Police top brass to take immediate action against the policemen who attacked the Colonel and his son allegedly with baseball bats and sharp-edged weapons on the night of March 13-14.

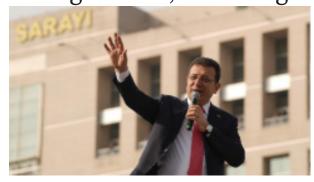
When told that there was a perception among defence officers regarding Western Command's lack of strong action in the matter, an Army officer said, "We can assure you that we made it very clear to the state government and the police in strong words that we expect the law to take its course. We shall ensure that things will be taken to their logical conclusion". In the October 1992 incident, a joint investigation was conducted by Brigadier Ashok Chaki and DIG NS Aulakh into the incident where Sumedh Singh Saini, then the SSP of Chandigarh, assaulted Lieutenant Colonel Ravi Vats. Vats, who was on leave from his posting in Leh and was at his residence in Chandigarh's Sector 7, stepped out to investigate gunshots he heard nearby. These gunshots were initially thought to be related to a possible militant attack on Saini's bodyguard, head constable Raj Kumar. Vats, dressed in civilian clothes, encountered Saini and his security team during this commotion. Reports at the time said there was an altercation when Saini asked the onlookers to clear the area to which the Army officer refused to oblige after which the SSP and his security personnel assaulted the Army officer. The police contended that the Lt Colonel was in civilian clothes and had not identified himself. Once Vats established his identity at the police station, he was treated with respect, the Chandigarh Police said. Following the assault, Vats was taken into custody and held at a police station overnight, an action later deemed illegal. The incident sparked outrage within the Army, which viewed it as an egregious overreach by the police against



one of its officers. It escalated into a significant confrontation between the Army and the Chandigarh Police. The Army lodged strong protests, citing multiple instances of alleged police high-handedness against its personnel in Punjab, where military forces were deployed to assist in countering militancy.Lt Gen Bipin Chandra Joshi, who later became the Chief of Army Staff, was then the Western Army commander and had spoken to the then Punjab chief minister Beant Singh and Governor Surendra Nath over the issue. Following mounting pressure, a joint investigation was ordered by Governor Nath, comprising a DIG and a brigadier. Following the incident, Saini was removed from the Chandigarh SSP post in early 1993 and repatriated to his parent cadre, Punjab. As per sources, Saini was chargesheeted under Rule 10 of All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969. Three other constables involved in the attack were placed under suspension, and disciplinary proceedings were initiated against them

The incident sparked outrage within the Army, which viewed it as an egregious overreach by the police against one of its officers. It escalated into a significant confrontation between the Army and the Chandigarh Police. The Army lodged strong protests, citing multiple prior instances of police high-handedness against its personnel in Punjab, where military forces were deployed to assist in countering militancy.Lt Gen Bipin Chandra Joshi, who later became the Chief of Army Staff, was then the Western Army Commander and is learned to have personally spoken to the then Puniab Chief Minister Beant Singh and Governor Surendra Nath. In response to the mounting pressure, a joint investigation was ordered by Punjab Governor Surendra Nath, comprising a Deputy Inspector General of Police and an Army Brigadier. The inquiry resulted in separate reports, with the Army's findings holding Saini accountable for misconduct. The incident led to Saini's eventual removal from the Chandigarh SSP post in early 1993 and repatriation to his parent cadre, Punjab. The Punjab government reverted him to his parent cadre in Punjab and contemplated disciplinary action, marking a rare instance of accountability for a police officer known for his aggressive tactics during Punjab's militancy era.

Türkiye police arrest Istanbul Mayor Imamoglu, a key Erdogan rival, over alleged corruption and terror links



GNS News Agency, March 21

Turkish police on Wednesday (March 18, 2025) arrested Istanbul's Mayor — a key rival of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan — as part of an investigation into alleged corruption and terror links, media reported. The state-run Anadolu Agency said prosecutors issued warrants for some 100 other people. Authorities closed several roads around Istanbul and banned demonstrations in the city for four days in an apparent effort to prevent protests following the arrest

The arrest came after a search of Ekrem Imamoglu's home, a day after a University invalidated his diploma, effectively disqualifying the popular opposition figure from running in the next presidential race. Having a University degree is a requisite for running in elections under Turkish law.The Mayor's party — the main opposition Republican

People's Party — is to hold a primary on Sunday where Mr. Imamoglu was expected to be chosen for its candidate in future presidential elections. Türkiye's next presidential vote is scheduled for 2028, but early elections are likely.

"We are facing great tyranny, but I want you to know that I will not be discouraged," Mr. Imamoglu said in a video message posted on social media. He accused the government of "usurping the will" of the people. In nullifying Imamoglu's diploma, Istanbul University cited alleged irregularities in his 1990 transfer from a private university in northern Cyprus to its Faculty of Business Administration. Imamoglu said he would challenge the decision. The opposition leader faces multiple lawsuits, including allegations of trying to influence a judicial expert investigating opposition-led municipalities. The cases could result in prison sentences and a political ban.Mr. Imamoglu is also appealing a 2022 conviction of insulting members of Türkiye's Supreme Electoral Council, a case that could result in a political ban. He was elected Mayor of Türkiye's largest city in March 2019 in a historic blow to Mr. Erdogan and the President's Justice and Development Party, which had controlled Istanbul for a quarter-century. The party pushed to void the municipal election results in the city of 16 million, alleging irregularities. The challenge resulted in a repeat of the election a few months later, which Mr. Imamoglu also won. The Mayor retained his seat following local elections last year, during which his party made significant gains against Mr. Erdogan's governing party.

Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir calls for turning country into 'hard state' in fight against terrorism

GNS News Agency, March 21

Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir on Tuesday (March 18, 2025) emphasised the need to turn Pakistan into a "hard state," asserting that the struggle against militancy was "a battle" for the country's "survival".Gen. Munir made the remarks at a high-level meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security convened days after Baloch militants hijacked a passenger train, resulting in the deaths of 25 passengers.National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq chaired the in-camera meeting, which he convened on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to review the country's security situation.At the meeting, the country's top civil and military leadership stressed a unified political commitment to combat militancy and terrorism with full force.

In his address to the committee, Gen. Munir said the struggle against militancy was "a battle for our survival and that of our future generations". He called for better governance and making Pakistan a "hard state" and asked, "How long will we continue to sacrifice countless lives in the style of a soft state?" "For sustainable development, all elements of national power will have to work in harmony," Gen. Munir said. He also asked, "How long will we continue to fill the governance gaps with the blood of the armed forces of Pakistan and the martyrs?" Highlighting the importance of peace, he said that nothing was more important than the security of the country as all its citizens owed existence to Pakistan. "If this is the country, then we are," he said.

He also stated that those who believe they can weaken Pakistan through terrorism should know that "we will unite and not only defeat them but also all their facilitators." The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Sharif, key ministers, leaders of different political parties, provincial Chief Ministers and Governors. The opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) refused to attend despite being invited by the government, as it had sought a meeting with its jailed founder Imran Khan ahead of the meeting, which was not granted. Later, it also demanded that Khan should have been invited to attend the meeting. During the over-six hours-long meeting, the military leadership briefed the parliamentary committee on the current security situation. According to Radio Pakistan, Prime Minister Sharif read out the declaration unanimously adopted by the committee.It stated that the committee members condemned the recent terror acts in the strongest terms, expressed solidarity with the victims' families and reiterated the country's unwavering resolve to eliminate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It also lauded the valour and professionalism of the security forces and law enforcement agencies in conducting their counter-terrorism operations."The committee stressed the need for a national consensus to repel terrorism, emphasising (a) strategic and unified political commitment to confront this menace with the full might of the state," the declaration read. The com-



mittee members stressed the need for immediate implementation of the National Action Plan and Operation Azmilstehkam (a counter-terrorism initiative) to dismantle terrorist networks, counter logistical support, and dismantle the nexus between terrorism and crime.

They also expressed concern over terrorist groups increasingly using social media platforms to spread propaganda, recruit followers, and coordinate their networks and called for a curb on the use of social media for such purposes. "The committee reiterated that no institution, individual or group working in collusion with hostile forces will be allowed to harm the peace and stability of Pakistan," it stated. It also regretted the lack of participation by some opposition members and reiterated that the consultation process in this regard would continue. The PTI-led opposition alliance Tehreek Tahaffuz-i-Ayeen Pakistan (TTAP) also stayed away. "The PTI founder should also be invited to such a meeting and without him, no meeting will have significance," said TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai while addressing a press conference with PTI leaders.

"Pakistan's dire circumstances require a joint session of parliament. [However], everyone should have a chance to speak in the joint session," he said. Reacting to the PTI's decision not to attend the security meeting. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the party was doing politics on the issue."The PTI has proved today that Imran Khan is their first and last priority [and that the] country's well-being and peace does not hold importance for them," Mr. Asif said on X.The meeting was held days after the country was shaken on March 11, when terrorists belonging to the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) hijacked a train with about 425 passengers on board in the Bolan area of Balochistan.Last week, apart from the Jaffar Express train incident and an attack on a security caravan in the Nushki area, rebels carried out several attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, targeting police and other security organisations. The security situation seems volatile in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces, where terrorists belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and BLA have repeatedly attacked the security personnel and civilians.

Fraser Town's loss is Koramangala's gain this Ramzan

GNS News Agency, March 21

As Mosque Road near Fraser Town sees a decline in Ramzan food business this year owing to civic work, Koramangala emerges as the most popular destination for those wanting to try the unique delicacies. The Frazer Town Residents' Welfare Association (FTRWA) had petitioned for a ban on street stalls the previous years due to concerns over congestion, waste management, and noise pollution. This year, ongoing roadwork has exacerbated the situation, forcing street vendors to relocate or shut down their stalls. Stalls that are operating reported around 50% to 70% decline in business.

Patgar Jaffer from Taj Restaurant said: "Sales are down by 50% this year. Before, we made around ?4 lakh to ?5 lakh, but now, with no street stalls and parking issues, fewer people are coming. It's not the same as before." Taj Restaurant is popular for its dishes like beef shawarma, tandoori fish, and mutton samosas. Zein, cashier of another restaurant, noted that customers are finding it difficult to locate the food counters. "People usually come with much excitement, but when they don't see the usual stalls, they go back. We introduce new items every year, but this time, fewer people are trying them. The road construction and lack of visibility are major issues," he said.

However, some of the regular customers said that they preferred the calmer, cleaner atmosphere over the chaos that used to be there every year in recent times. Fathima Musthafa, who has been coming to Mosque Road for eight years, said: "This year, the crowd is much less. People can walk around freely and the quality of old restaurants is being maintained."On the other side, business has been booming in Koramangala 5th block where the Ramzan Food Mela has been organised with more than 50 stalls and an average footfall of 5,000 people every day.

Afza owns a bakery stall which offers a variety of



sweets, including malwa pudding, kunafa, bread malai roll, walnut pudding, Arabian pudding, and tiramisu. He said that kunafa and malai roll are his best-selling items with 50 to 100 pieces being sold every day. "People prefer Koramangala over Fraser Town as everything is available under one roof," he said. The profitable business in Koramangala is due to its location being a commercial area rather than residential, say stall owners. Many of them have also shifted from Fraser Town to Koramangala and some of their regular customers now arrive at their new stalls to eat their old favourites. "Sweets like rabdi malai are mainly famous during Ramzan with a sale of 100 to 120 pieces per day. One of my regular customer took sweets worth ?8,500 recently," said Hussain, owner of M.K. Lazeez in Koramangala. When asked about choosing Koramangala over other food streets, he highlighted the better security and safety measures. Places like Kamanahalli, Bamboo Bazaar, and Adinagar are organising Ramzan food mela this year. Although business has not peaked yet, stalls in Johnson Market and Shivajinagar are also seeing good footfall. Hamza from Hamza Juice Corner, a stall with variety of juices like Mohabbat-e-sherbat, raw mango, and blue lime, has over five stalls in different Ramzan food streets.

Trump-Putin call: Key highlights from White House, Kremlin statements



GNS News Agency, March 21

The White House says a lengthy phone call between Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin had achieved "movement to peace" in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.But while Tuesday's call ended with Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump agreeing on an immediate pause on strikes against energy infrastructure, the Kremlin makes clear that Russia has many additional demands before it will consider a broader ceasefire. Much of the significantly shorter White House statement, meanwhile, looks ahead to Mr. Trump's hopes of improved relations with Russia. Here's what the White House and Kremlin said of what Putin and Trump discussed: "Today, President Trump and President Putin spoke about the need for peace and a ceasefire in the Ukraine war. Both leaders agreed this conflict needs to end with a lasting peace. They also stressed the need for improved bilateral relations between the United States and Russia. The blood and treasure that both Ukraine and Russia have been spending in this war would be better spent on the needs of their people."This conflict should never have started and should have been ended long ago with sincere and good faith peace efforts. The leaders agreed that the movement to peace will begin with an energy and infrastructure ceasefire, as well as technical negotiations on implementation of a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea, full ceasefire and permanent peace. These negotiations will begin immediately in the Middle East.

The leaders spoke broadly about the Middle East as a region of potential cooperation to prevent future conflicts. They further discussed the need to stop proliferation of strategic weapons and will engage with others to ensure the broadest possible application. The two leaders shared the view that Iran should never be in a position to destroy Israel. The two leaders agreed that a future with an improved bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia has huge upside. This includes enormous economic deals and geopolitical stability when peace has been achieve The leaders continued a detailed and frank exchange of views on the situation around Ukraine. Vladimir Putin expressed gratitude to Donald Trump for his desire to help achieve the noble goal of ending hostilities and human lossesThe Russian President declared his readiness to thoroughly work out possible ways to resolve the conflict together with his American partners, which should be comprehensive, sustainable and long-term. And, of course, to take into account the absolute need to eliminate the root causes of the crisis and ensure Russia's legitimate interests in the field of security In the context of the U.S. President's initiative to introduce a 30-day ceasetire, the Hussian side outlined a number of significant points regarding ensuring effective control

over a possible ceasefire along the entire line of contact the necessity to stop the forced mobilization in Ukraine and the rearmament of the Ukrainian armed forces. Serious risks associated with the Kyiv's regime inability to respect agreements were also noted, given that it has repeatedly sabotaged and violated agreements that have been reached. Attention was drawn to the barbaric terrorist crimes committed by Ukrainian fighters against the civilian population of the Kursk region. It was emphasized that the key condition for preventing the escalation of the conflict and working toward its resolution through political and diplomatic means should be a complete cessation of foreign military aid and the provision of intelligence information to Kyiv. Vladimir Putin confirmed that the Russian side is ready to be guided by humanitarian considerations and, in the event of their surrender, guarantees the lives and decent treatment of the Ukrainian Armed Forces soldiers in accordance with Russian laws and the norms of international law.

Donald Trump put forward a proposal for the parties to the conflict to mutually refrain from attacks on energy infrastructure facilities for 30 days. Vladimir Putin responded positively to this initiative and immediately gave the Russian military the appropriate command. The Russian President also responded constructively to Donald Trump's idea of ??implementing a well-known initiative concerning the safety of navigation in the Black Sea. It was agreed to begin negotiations to further work out specific details of such an agreement. Vladimir Putin informed that on March 19 a prisoner exchange will be carried out between the Russian and Ukrainian sides — 175 for 175 people. In addition, as a gesture of goodwill, 23 seriously wounded Ukrainian servicemen who are undergoing treatment in Russian medical institutions will be handed over. The leaders confirmed their intention to continue bilateral efforts to achieve a Ukrainian settlement, including taking into account the above-mentioned proposals of the U.S. President. For this purpose, Russian and American expert groups are being created. Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump also touched upon other issues on the international agenda, including the situation in the Middle East and the Red Sea region. Joint efforts will be made to stabilize the situation in crisis areas, establish cooperation on nuclear non-proliferation and global security. This, in turn, will contribute to improving the overall atmosphere of Russian-American relations. One of the positive examples is the vote made in solidarity in the U.N. on the resolution regarding the Ukrainian conflictMutual interest in normalizing bilateral relations was expressed in light of the special responsibility of Russia and the United States for ensuring security and stability in the world. In this context, a wide range of areas in which our countries could estab-

Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar turns 'no-drone zone' as emotions run high

GNS News Agency, March 21

Amid calls for the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb at Khultabad in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhaiinagar district, the administration has declared the grave of the Mughal ruler a "no drone" zone, an official said on Wednesday (March 19, 2025). On the social media sphere, police are busy tracking "objectionable" posts over the matter and getting them deleted, another official said. Over 500 such online posts have been deleted so far, he said. Demonstrations have been held across the State seeking the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb at Khultabad town, about 25 km from the district headquarters, with many politicians echoing the call. Such a protest sparked violence in Nagpur on Monday. The district administration has made the area a "no drone" zone, an official said, adding that a State reserve police force company and 50 other personnel have been deployed in the town to maintain law and order. District Collector Dilip Swami, who visited the Archaeological Society of Indian-protected site on Tuesday, told reporters, "No one should believe in rumours and people should contact the administration or the police if they have any information concerning the matter." Meanwhile, A team of ten police personnel and officials is working round the



clock in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city to track provocative posts on social media platforms and get those removed, he said. Cyber Police Inspector Shivcharan Pandhare told PTI, "The hashtag (#) Alamgir and Aurangzeb are trending. We are using these hashtags to check such posts and the offensive comments tied to them."The official said they have got 506 posts removed from various social media platforms so far and warned over 80 individuals to desist from posting incendiary content online. "But from now onwards, we will register offences against those behind objectionable posts" he added

Tesla dealerships under attack in US as Musk takes up vital role under Trump administration

GNS News Agency, March 21

Seattle: Cybertrucks set ablaze. Bullets and Molotov cocktails aimed at Tesla showrooms. Attacks on property carrying the logo of Elon Musk's electric-car company are cropping up across the US and overseas. While no injuries have been reported, Tesla showrooms, vehicle lots, charging stations and privately owned cars have been targeted. There has been a clear uptick since President Donald Trump took office and empowered Musk to oversee a new Department of Government Efficiency that is slashing government spending. Experts on domestic extremism say it's impossible to know yet if the spate of incidents will balloon into a long-term pattern. In Trump's first term, his properties in New York City, Washington and elsewhere became a natural place for protest. In the early days of his second term, Tesla is filling that role. "Tesla is an easy target," said Randy Blazak, a sociologist who studies political violence. "They're rolling down our streets. They have dealerships in our neighborhoods." Musk critics have

organised dozens of peaceful demonstrations at Tesla dealerships and factories across North America and Europe. Some Tesla owners, including a US senator who feuded with Musk, have vowed to sell their vehicles. But the attacks are keeping law enforcement busy. Prosecutors in Colorado charged a woman last month in connection with a string of attacks on Tesla dealerships, including Molotov cocktails thrown at vehicles and the words "Nazi cars' spray-painted on a building. And federal agents in South Carolina last week arrested a man they say set fire to Tesla charging stations near Charleston. An agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives wrote in an affidavit that authorities found writings critical of the government and DOGE in his bedroom and wallet. "The statement made mention of sending a message based on these beliefs," the agent wroteA number of the most prominent incidents have been reported in left-leaning cities in the Pacific Northwest, like Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, where anti-Trump and anti-Musk sentiment runs high.

Trump and the silencing of America's universities

GNS News Agency, March 21

The 1960s and 1970s saw a significant shift in the academic landscape, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. This period marked the emergence of a counter-western narrative, where third-world literatures gained prominence, and the master narratives of the West were challenged. As a result, the idea of independence, rewriting histories, and promoting democracy and freedom became increasingly important, as is evident in the student uprisings in the volatile 1960s. Students sought freedom in the classroom and university, leading to massive demonstrations against the establishment as well as against the Vietnam War, Aimé Césaire's Discourse on Colonialism. Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth, and Edward Said's Orientalism became the seminal works introduced in the humanities curriculum. These counter-narratives questioned the West's idea of white supremacy, describing the strife between the coloniser and the colonised, and paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse academic environment. However, the Trump regime is attempting to undermine this progress by suppressing such discourses of marginalised communities with its impact on universities in mainly two key areas of concern: the defunding of certain critical courses that oppose right-wing ideology, and the clampdown on Palestinian students and supporters of the Palestinian cause. Both issues are closely tied to the university setting. The rise of the far right

Mr. Trump's administration has targeted university programmes and courses that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for defunding. Specifically, the subjects that may be impacted include: diversity and inclusion studies that promote multiplicity, equity, and inclusion on campus, and critical race theory that explores the intersection of race and power in society. Gender Studies, African American Studies, Latinx Studies, Asian American Studies and Native American studies may also face funding cuts, not only undermining academic freedom but also perpetuating a culture of ignorance and intolerance. The rise of the far-right ideology, consequently, poses a significant threat to academic freedom and intellectual dissent, a danger to the emerging world order. Trumpism, with its emphasis on white supremacy, misogyny, and virulent nationalism, symbolises this significant threat. Its agenda to suppress research in "left-wing" areas is a blatant attempt to silence centres of higher learning and stifle critical thinking. This silencing is not new, as universities have historically been sites of struggle for marginalised communities. But it is important to draw parallels between the current state of affairs and the post-independence era in universities worldwide,

Crimea is coveted by both Russia and Ukraine. Why?



GNS News Agency, March 21

Hyderabad: Russia's seizure of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine exactly 11 years ago on March 18, 2014, was quick and bloodless, but it sent Moscow's relations with the West into a downward spiral unseen since the Cold War.It also paved the way for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, during which Moscow annexed more land from the war-torn country.Here is a look at the diamond-shaped peninsula in the Black Sea, coveted by both Russia and Ukraine for its naval bases and beaches.

Why is Crimea important?

Crimea's unique location makes it a strategically important asset, and Russia has spent centuries fighting for it. Crimea was home to Turkic-speaking Tatars when the Russian empire first annexed it in the 18th century. It briefly regained independence as a Tatar republic two centuries later before being swallowed by the Soviet Union. In 1944, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin deported nearly 200,000 Tatars, or about a third of Crimea's population, to Central Asia, 3,200 km to the east. Stalin had accused them of collaborating with Nazi Germany — a claim widely dismissed by historians. An estimated half of them died in the next 18 months of hunger and harsh conditions. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev transferred the peninsula from Russia to Ukraine in 1954, when both were part of the USSR, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the unification of Moscow and Kyiv. In 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, the peninsula became part of newly independent Ukraine.

Russia kept a foot in the door, however: Its Black Sea Fleet had a base in the city of Sevastopol, and Crimea as part of Ukraine — continued to host it. Sevastopol also was a preferred holiday destination for Nicholas II, the last Russian czar. The southern town of Yalta was a prime holiday destination in Soviet times, with many sanatoriums there. It drew worldwide renown when Stalin, US President Franklin D Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met there in 1945 to discuss the fate of Germany and Europe after World War II. For Kyiv, Crimea had been a strategic asset, too. By the time Russia annexed it in 2014, it had been a part of Ukraine for 60 years and had become part of the country's identity. Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of independent Ukraine, said Kyiv had invested some \$100 billion into the peninsula between 1991 and 2014. From a security perspective, Ukraine needs Crimea in order to have control over activities in the Black Sea.

How did Russia seize Crimea?

In 2014, a massive popular uprising in Ukraine forced pro-Moscow President Victor Yanukovich from office. Putin responded by sending troops to overrun Crimea — they initially appeared on the peninsula in uniforms without insignia — and calling a plebiscite on joining Russia, which Ukraine and the West dismissed as illegal.

Russia's annexation of Crimea was recognized internationally only by countries such as North Korea and Sudan. In Russia, it touched off a wave of patriotism, and "Krymnash!" — or "Crimea is ours!" — became a rallying cry. This move sent Putin's popularity soaring. His approval rating, which had declined to 65% in January 2014, shot to 86% in June, according to the Levada Center, an independent Russian pollster. What happened after the annexation?

Putin has called Crimea "a sacred place," and has prosecuted those who publicly argue it is part of Ukraine. Repressions against the Crimean Tatars continued under Putin, despite Moscow's denials of discrimination.

where there was a surge in studying African and Latin American literatures, gender studies and ecofeminism, Third World cultural studies and anti-war literature. These academic movements challenged dominant narratives and sought to dismantle the binary systems that perpetuated inequality and totalitarianism.

Revisiting Mr. Trump's last presidency, we see a strong leaning towards unilateralism, particularly in his immigration policies. His "America First" approach led to the implementation of several controversial measures, including the travel ban targeting predominantly Muslim countries and the construction of a border wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. And, more recently, he has gone after the Palestinian sympathisers. Understandably, Mr. Trump's immigration policies are deeply rooted in his nationalist and populist ideology, which emphasises the need to protect American jobs and culture from perceived external threats. This ideology has been criticised for being discriminatory and xenophobic, with many arguing that it is a form of ultra-nationalism that borders on Nazism.Mr. Trump's presidency has been marked by several contentious executive orders, two of which sparked widespread debate and criticism. The first order, signed in 2017, banned immigration from several Muslim-majority countries, prompting a strong reaction from university presidents across the U.S. In a joint letter, presidents of over 50 universities urged Mr. Trump to rescind the order, arguing that it contradicted America's long-standing tradition of embracing diversity and welcoming people from various nations and faiths. They emphasised that immigrant students have significantly contributed to the country's growth in various fields, including technology, research, and labour. However, a similar outcry was noticeably absent when in his second presidency, Mr. Trump signed another order that effectively targeted individuals guilty of being Palestinian sympathisers. Clearly, Mr. Trump's policies have had a profound impact on universities and international students, particularly those who speak out against injustice and promote diversity. The crackdown on Palestinian students and voices that counter Mr. Trump's views on Israel has created a chilling effect on campuses, with many students and faculty members fearing repercussions for speaking out. This silence is particularly concerning, as educational institutions should be promoting diversity, inclusivity, and free speech, rather than punishing those who speak out against genocide. The irony is that America has greatly benefited from immigrant contributions to its economic, intellectual, social, and cultural progress.But Mr. Trump's ideology has led to a surge in anti-Palestinian sentiment, with some politicians calling for the deportation of foreign students involved in pro-Palestinian protests.



This has created a culture of fear and intimidation on campuses. Many students and faculty members are hesitant to speak out against injustice, fearing that they will be targeted, harassed, or even deported. This is particularly concerning for international students, who may face visa restrictions, deportation, or other forms of retaliation for speaking out against Mr. Trump's policies. The silencing of dissenting voices on campuses has far-reaching implications for democracy, free speech, and human rights.Mr. Trump's anti-immigrant discourse is not just about creating a scapegoat. It is part of a broader narrative that aims to reestablish nationalist patriotic values and targets globalisation. His opposition to uncontrolled immigration is linked to his critique of globalisation processes, which he sees as leading to job losses for American workers.

This ideology has become a sort of new populist movement that is being embraced by right-wing movements in Europe and elsewhere. In this context, the role of intellectuals becomes crucial in countering Mr. Trump's brand of leadership that rejects integration with other communities and promotes a selfish, self-centered agenda. It is essential for scholars, experts, and thinkers to mobilise public opinion, challenge discriminatory policies, and advocate progressive values, thereby recognising and taking a stand against the apartheid state engineered by Mr. Trump. As W.E.B. Du Bois asked, "If indeed what we confront is an apartheid state, then what is our responsibility as scholars and educators?" For him, universities are sanctuaries for marginalised communities, providing a forum for the public intellectual ready to speak truth to power and foster a culture of resistance and critical thinking, challenging dominant narratives, and developing pedagogies that promote social justice. Mr. Trump's agenda to suppress radical research or mentally stress students is a form of despotism with implications that extend beyond the United States, with many regarding them as a threat to global social order and

Ukraine war is existential, Europe will step in to support if U.S. withdraws: Estonia MFA Secretary-General

GNS News Agency, March 21

As Europe attempts to build a "coalition of the willing" to support Ukraine, it is eyeing the outcome of the Trump-Putin talks held on Tuesday (March 18, 2025) nervously. Speaking to The Hindu on the side-lines of the Raisina Dialogue in Delhi, Estonian Foreign Ministry's Secretary-General Jonatan Vseviov says for countries in Europe, especially those bordering Russia, the situation is "existential", and while European Union (EU) still hopes the U.S. will realign with them, are preparing for their own defences. For the last few years, we've seen European countries, Estonia included, coming to the Raisina dialogue, and trying to get India to change its position on Ukraine, for India to cut off its oil from Russia, and to put more pressure on Mr. Putin to end the war. With the global realignment and the US position towards Russia changing, what are your hopes from India now?

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a major concern for us. We have used the word existential to describe the way this war affects us. And we don't use that word lightly. It is obviously a major concern for European security, and when you look at what is at stake in this war, then it's a global issue: territorial integrity, sovereignty, the validity of the U.N Charter. This war will one day be over, and then we will be either in a situation where we manage to uphold those principles, or we will find ourselves in a situation where it has become the norm that a larger state can change borders, where the so called great powers of the world can divide up continents between them. We're not asking for India to stand up for European interests or for Ukraine's interests. We're asking for India to use its powerful voice in upholding India's interest, in a rules based world, and in the United Nations principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Despite this, India has not changed its stance on Russia since 2022, and now the United States is doing a 180 degrees. Has European diplomacy failed to convince them of its point of view?

Obviously, the fact that the war is still ongoing does mean that it's a failure, not just the European failure to convince Mr. Putin that the time is no longer on the side of aggression, and that the world is not going to allow him to turn back time to when there are empires. So, yes, it is a collective failure and the Ukrainians are the ones paying



the highest price for this in the unspeakable losses on a daily basis. United States President Trump has declared his goal to be peace. The fact that the U.S. has now turned military assistance and intelligence sharing [after a pause] is extremely positive. But if the United States were to take a step back, then Europe would have to take a step forward. And I think over the past few weeks, Europe has demonstrated its ability to do so.In what way can Europe change the course of a war that could not be changed with the might of the U.S. power behind Ukraine for the last three years? Boots on the ground?

We shall see what the future brings Europe. But we have had very active meetings on a weekly basis, several times a week, led by the U.K., trying to think through and present security guarantees for Ukraine that would kick in to gear once the fighting is over. This is something that we should have started working on three years now, but better late than never. Is the announcement made of an EU-India BTIA by the end of the year realistic, given it hasn't been agreed to in 20 years? How could India and Estonia benefit from a trade agreement? Well. I'm inclined to be optimistic. Now, Estonia is 1,000 times smaller than India. Its population exactly three zeros less (1.37 million to India's 1.4 billion). Even so, in high tech cooperation, education, business cooperation, I think we can grow, especially given our capacities and the enormous talent pool in India. But for us to be able to take advantage of this potential, we need to understand each other, where we're coming from, and what

The barriers faced by construction workers

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Construction is the fastest-growing sector, contributing about 9% to the national GDP and projected to reach \$1.4 trillion by 2025. Around 3 crore workers are estimated to be working in this sector in India by 2030. However, last month, Larsen and Toubro Chairman and Managing Director, N. Subrahmanyan, voiced growing concerns over labour shortages in the sector. He said that some workers are reluctant to relocate for work due to the availability of welfare schemes, which offer them financial security. This narrative oversimplifies the structural issues that construction labourers face.

Construction workers, especially migrant labourers endure a fragmented employment landscape characterised by frequent relocations, high job insecurity, inconsistent access to welfare benefits, and precarious working conditions. Despite legal frameworks such as the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) (BOCW) Act, 1996, accessing welfare entitlements remains a significant challenge. Around 5.65 crore construction workers are registered with State construction boards. These have collected around ?70,000 crore cesses, which are to be used for the welfare of construction workers. But this amount largely remains unutilised due to a series of issues. A primary barrier for construction workers is obtaining and maintaining the documentation required for welfare registration. Proofs of identity, date of birth, and residence are essential documents for accessing benefits. However, due to the transient nature of their work, many labourers lack permanent addresses, making it difficult for them to secure documents such as birth certificates, residence proofs, and rental agreements.

The requirement for an 'employment certificate' validating 90 days of work in a year further complicates the process. This document is typically issued by employers, but in the case of a few States, it is substituted by selfcertification or a trade union certificate. Still, employers are majorly called or visited for verification. Contractors are unwilling or unable to provide certificates or requisite information to the State, leaving workers unable to prove their eligibility. Additionally, verification protocols vary across States. While State governments collect a 1-2% construction cess under the BOCW Act to fund worker welfare, approximately 75% of it remains unutilised, according to a 2023 Parliamentary Standing Committee report. This discrepancy is largely due to the fragmented nature of worker databases, inconsistent verification protocols, and cumbersome registration processes. For example, construction workers affected by seasonal employment disruptions, such as heat waves, struggle to access direct benefit transfers despite legal provisions. During the ban on construction due to air pollution in north India, lakhs of workers lost their livelihoods but faced delays and administrative challenges in securing financial relief. The lack of digital public infrastructure to facilitate rapid disbursement exacerbates their vulnerability. Migrant workers often move across multiple States searching for employment, but the absence of interoperable systems means that benefits registered in one State cannot be accessed in another. For instance, a worker registered under the Haryana BOCW Board loses access to welfare if he relocates to Delhi. This disrupts continuity in welfare delivery and discourages workers from registering altogether. Proposed solutions

To address labour shortages in the construction industry, we propose the following actionable reforms. First, a unified national labour identification system, akin to the One Nation One Ration Card scheme, would facilitate inter-State portability of welfare benefits. If BOCW registrations are linked to UAN on e-Shram and worker data across States is integrated, construction labourers could access their entitlements regardless of their location.

Second. State governments should adopt open-source digital platforms to improve the accessibility and efficiency of welfare schemes. Implementing a centralised portal with standardised workflows would reduce administrative delays port automated verification through Aadhaar seeding and real-time tracking of welfare disbursement. Simplifying documentation protocols by accepting alternative proofs, and relaxing the verification protocols, can ease the process. State governments can facilitate bulk registration through on-site camps, ensuring that large construction projects maintain accurate worker records. This would reduce dependency on employer-issued certificates. Investing in skill development programmes for construction is essential for addressing long-term labour shortages. A robust skilling ecosystem tailored to meet the evolving demands of the industry can enhance worker productivity and retention. But skilling alone is not enough — ensuring safe and dignified work environments is equally critical for maintaining workers' health and efficiency. Construction firms can play a key role in this by committing to both medium-term skilling initiatives and improved workplace standards, creating a more stable, skilled, and resilient workforce. In conclusion, labour shortages cannot be addressed without acknowledging and resolving the systemic barriers to welfare access and employment continuity. Tarun Cherukuri Founder and CEO, Indus Action; Harshil Sharma Director Government Relations, Indus Action

From the 1942 rubber crisis to India's tech talent boom: Lessons in innovation and workforce readiness

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February 1942 marks a pivotal moment in the history of Science as the United States lost 90% of its natural rubber reserves in the wake of Singapore's capture by Japan. Before the war, the U.S. imported nearly all its rubber from plantations in British Malaya, the Dutch Indies, British India, and French Indochina. Plantations in these regions comprised 96 percent of the global production of rubber.

The country's war economy required rubber to operate: the production of a single tank required one ton of rubber and seventy-five tons per battleship. The country had a small inventory in contrast to its humungous demand and was in a critical bind. There was no good substitute for pneumatic tires, natural latex sources were practically zero inside the country, and bringing raw materials in from Latin America or Africa posed grave constraints. Unless American scientists and technologists could substitute nearly a million tons of natural rubber within 18 months with a synthetic alternative, there was a genuine risk that the war would be lost. Under the U.S. government sponsorship, a group of rubber research and manufacturing companies came together in a common spirit of technical collaboration and commitment to manufacture a general-purpose synthetic rubber, GR-S (Government Rubber-Styrene), in commercial quantity. Across the U.S., these firms, working with a network of researchers in government, academic, and industrial laboratories, created and produced in record time sufficient synthetic rubber to supply the needs of the U.S.

and its allies in World War II. This collaboration grew the U.S. synthetic rubber industry from an annual production of 231 tons of general-purpose rubber in 1941 to a production of 70,000 tons per month in 1945. Not only did the invention help the U.S. and its allies win WW II but also contributed to over 50% of the rubber we use today. The Synthetic Rubber Program left an enormous and long-lasting influence on the United States's ability to deal with supply chain shortages and its development of scientific expertise in general and the chemical industry in specific. The program created structures for scientists at universities such as Arkon and MIT to collaborate directly with industry researchers - one that created a template for future large-scale research initiatives, such as the Manhattan Project and NASA's Apollo program, and birthed the national laboratory system deepening the talent base in Physics, Mathematics, and Engineering within the country. The dual learnings of supply chain readiness and scientific capacity building are much needed on a war scale for the emerging industries of data centres, semiconductors, and clean energy that drive the new economy. The world FDI activity in 2024 in these industries summed up to \$540 billion and was driven by big, capitalhungry projects. India, with its growing data economy, is amid a data centre buildout surge with overall data centre capacity expected to go up to eight times over the next five years and over \$45 billion planned spending in semiconductor and clean energy projects. This growth highlights the critical need for skilled professionals to manage and innovate within these expanding infrastructures with some esti-



mates (WEF) predicting over two to three million net jobs to be created over the same time period across the world. North America and Europe, however, exhibit an older workforce mix of employees - over 55 years outnumbering employees under 30, thus creating replacement opportunities for other economies with the availability of mobile talent. Data centre staff shortages also vary by region. While operators from North America and Europe describe difficulty in finding skilled junior-level operators, those from China, India, and the Middle East report a disproportionate lack of experienced operations managers. With the pace of growth in the data centre and associated power infrastructure markets, demand for skilled people to perform electrical and mechanical installation work is lagging quickly behind. Respondents to a Uptime Institute survey say their most significant skills gaps affect electrical (33%).

What factors influence women's political participation?



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The participation of women in Indian politics has been a subject of extensive discourse among scholars, especially given the paradox that while India has produced several influential women leaders, overall political engagement among women remains poor. Unlike many countries where the gender gap in political participation began narrowing in the 1990s, India saw this shift only in the 2010s. While discussions on women's participation often highlight the social and cultural biases that hinder their electoral success less attention is given to how everyday women engage with the electoral process when opportunities arise. Their voting patterns, choices, and agency in shaping election outcomes remain under-explored. And, though political parties and women's movements frequently celebrate women voters during elections, this recognition often treats them as a homogenous group, overlooking the intersections of caste, class, religion, and region that shape their political behaviour. Women's support for Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. elections, and their participation in the riots of the 1990s in India illustrate how women's political engagement is far more complex and requires in-depth understanding.

It is within this context that Rajeshwari Deshpande's study, 'Shaping of the Woman Constituency in Indian Elections: Evidence from the NES Data', becomes significant. Her analysis of National Election Studies (NES) data sheds light on the increasing voter turnout among women and their growing participation in the political sphere. By examining how women vote and whether their choices are influenced primarily by gender or by other social identities, her research provides a nuanced understanding of the evolving role of women in Indian elections. Her findings help to understand whether we are closer to shaping a women's constituency in Indian elections. This study offers critical insights into the gendered dimensions of Indian elections, highlighting key patterns, contradictions, and challenges in women's political agency and its broader socio-political implications.

Mere beneficiaries or active agents?

As mentioned earlier, it was only in 2010 that there was a significant increase in the share of women who voted; and all political parties sought to capitalise on this shift by introducing policies and schemes specifically targeting women. However, these policies often frame women as passive beneficiaries rather than political agents. Welfare programs like Ujjwala and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana were pivotal to the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, while schemes like 'Ladli Behna' and 'Ladli Laxmi' were credited for the party's success in Madhya Pradesh. These initiatives reinforce the notion of women as dependents, with political leaders positioned as benevolent providers rather than recognising women as autonomous decision-makers. Deshpande argues that high voter turnout does not necessarily translate to real political power. For years, women were considered marginal participants in politics, with efforts made to carve out a 'non-political' political constituency for them. Despite their growing presence at the polls, political parties and media continue to frame their votes as driven by welfare benefits. Analysing NES data helps assess whether the rise in women voters signals real political agency or mere surface-level inclusion. While the increasing turnout of women voters in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections is noteworthy, voting is not the only form of political participation. Participation in rallies, campaigns, political affiliations, and policy advocacy also indicates political involvement. In these areas, women still lag behind men. Only 14% of women report seeking advice from their spouses on voting decisions — indicating growing agency —but this remains significantly higher than

men's. This suggests that despite increased voter participation, deeper political engagement faces social and structural barriers.

One explanation scholars offer for the increased turnout of women is the self-empowerment hypothesis, which suggests that rising literacy rates and employment opportunities have empowered women to vote independently. Efforts by the Election Commission to ensure women's voter registration could also be attributed to the increased turnout. However, the author challenges this explanation, pointing out two critical contradictions: women's overall workforce participation remains low, weakening the argument that economic independence is driving higher turnout. Additionally, the proportion of registered female voters compared to male voters remains imbalanced, indicating that fewer women are being registered. An alternative explanation for the increased women voter turnout could be the large-scale male migration of men contributing to higher turnout among women in States traditionally considered socially and economically 'backward'. These trends highlight that while turnout has increased, broader political participa-

Women's voting behaviour in India is not driven solely by gender identity but is also deeply shaped by regional, caste, and class dynamics. The NES data highlight that State-specific political and social contexts significantly influence electoral choices, undermining the idea of a unified, pan-Indian women's voting bloc. Instead, women's voting preferences are molded within the broader framework of their community identities. State-level variations demonstrate this complexity. For instance, in States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal, where electoral politics have historically been shaped by strong regional parties, women's preferences are often aligned with regional political movements rather than national gender-based voting trends. Caste and class divisions further complicate this narrative. The BJP's voter base has traditionally been skewed toward urban, upper-class, and upper-caste groups, while Congress has drawn more support from the urban poor and marginalised communities. However, this alignment is also not absolute — many women, particularly from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, continue to vote based on the interests of their communities rather than on a broader gender-based agenda. Women's support for different parties

NES data indicate that Congress has historically maintained a gender advantage, consistently receiving more female support than male. This trend continued in 2024, except in 2014, when the party suffered a nationwide decline. Left parties also had a gender advantage, but their declining influence has diminished this effect on the national stage. The BJP, in contrast, has faced a gender disadvantage, with fewer women voting for the party compared to men. However, this gap has been narrowing. Previously, the gender gap in BJP support exceeded 20%, whereas in 2024, it reduced to approximately 7%. The BJP's targeted outreach to women has contributed to this shift, though much of its support still comes only from welfare beneficiaries. Even within this group, men support the BJP more than women. Region-specific variations further complicate women's support for the BJP. In some non-BJP-ruled States, more women than men voted for the party, despite a lack of increased female voter turnout. Conversely, in other States, women showed a stronger preference for opposition parties, creating an uneven gender gap. This suggests that while the BJP has made inroads among female voters, gender alone does not define women's electoral choices other intersecting identities and political contexts remain crucial. The data from past elections highlight three key trends in women's political participation in India. First, while women's voter turnout has steadily increased, their overall political engagement beyond voting remains lower than men's. Second, women's voting patterns and political involvement are not just shaped by gender identity; factors such as caste, class, and regional influences also play a significant role. Third, despite targeted outreach, the BJP has historically faced a gender disadvantage, with more men than women supporting the party. These developments indicate that we are still far from the formation of a distinct women's constituency in Indian politics, as their electoral choices remain intertwined with broader socio-political fac-

BSNL has been dialling the wrong consultant

In May 2024, a report that the American consultancy group, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), was to be involved in the revival strategy of state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and that BSNL was to pay BCG ?132 crore for the consultancy drew much attention. BCG has reportedly recommended reducing the workforce among other major steps. While this became a much-talked about news item, this is not a one-off event. In recent years, the public sector's reliance on the services of external consultancy firms has increased exponentially — and not just in India but also worldwide. While the overall spending of the government is not available for India, there is some data available for other countries. For instance, France spent over •1 billion on intellectual services provided by consultancies in 2021, while the Australian government spent A\$21 billion on external labour hire in 2021-22.

Need for scrutinyThe case of BSNL has once again drawn attention to the contentious issue of the growing influence of consultancy firms within the public sector. It raises important questions about the efficacy and the implications of outsourcing strategic decision-making in the public sector. Given the increased involvement of external consultancies, there is a need that this is scrutinised.

The central critique by most people is rooted in their lack of "skin in the game". Consultancy firms are given projects and contracts to provide strategic advice but bear no responsibility for the outcomes of their recommendations. Like in this case, for example, if BSNL's fortunes fail to improve despite the implementation of BCG's strategies, the consultancy faces no consequences. This lack of accountability creates a troubling misalignment of incentives. The consultants are rewarded handsomely regardless of the results, while BSNL — and by extension, the Indian taxpayer — will bear the full brunt of any failure. Moreover, such an arrangement undermines the very purpose of hiring external expertise: to deliver tangible improvements and longterm viability. Also, if you are paying someone to solve your problems without any major accountability, there will always be some problems left to be solved. In addition, the overreliance on consultancies erodes the capacity of the state to innovate and manage its enterprises effectively. Over time, this dependence on external expertise creates a vicious cycle. Instead of building internal capabilities, they

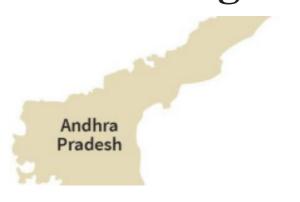
become perpetually reliant on external advice — and this

does not come cheapImpact on state capacity, conflict of interestThis kind of dependency has much broader implications for the state capacity. The skills and the knowledge learned by the consultancies on these projects are not transferred to the public officials. In effect, this sets up a negative feedback loop, where public sector employees lose skills and institutional knowledge, meaning, the next project or piece of work will still need external inputs. The proliferation of consultancy contracts reflects a deeper crisis of confidence in the public sector's ability to govern itself as well, by implicitly undermining their own legitimacy. This outsourcing of expertise not only weakens public institutions but also creates an unaccountable parallel bureaucracy of consultants who wield significant influence over public policy and resource allocation without subject to the same democratic oversight or accountability as public offi-

Consultancy firms often serve multiple clients across industries, including competitors and regulators, which can create conflicts of interest. Their advice may be influenced by these overlapping relationships, raising questions about the impartiality and the integrity of their recommendations. The conflict of interest has recently been much debated in most countries leading to major consultancy firms considering breaking their various functions. An additional problem is that the objectives of public sector enterprises are often very different from those of the private sector. Consultancy firms often approach problems from a profitmaximisation perspective, emphasising cost-cutting, efficiency, and market competitiveness. While these strategies might yield short-term gains, they may not align with the broader public service mandate of organisations. For instance, BSNL, as a public sector enterprise, has historically played a vital role in India's telecommunications landscape, particularly in bridging the digital divide and bringing telecommunication services to rural and underserved ar-

The aggressive cost-cutting measures might compromise the quality of service in rural areas, where BSNL's presence is crucial in providing affordable telecommunications access. Overall, a purely market-driven strategy could divert the public enterprise's focus from its social responsibilities, which will essentially undermine its role as a public

Heralding new land reforms



GNS News Agency, March 21

The N. Chandrababu Naidu government has introduced a series of land reforms to overhaul land administration in Andhra Pradesh. These include enacting new laws and amending existing ones, implementing policy changes, introducing administrative modifications to streamline the management of land records, and addressing land disputes. The government claims that these measures are necessary to protect property rights, ensure transparency, and make land governance more efficient.

One major legislative change was the repeal of the Andhra Pradesh Land Titling Act, 2024. The government argued that the previous law, introduced by the YSRCP government, had removed the role of civil courts in land disputes, leaving landowners at the discretion of Title Registration Officers, who lacked the necessary legal expertise. Another reform was the enactment of the Andhra Pradesh Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2024, which prescribes imprisonment ranging from 10 to 14 years along with penalties equivalent to the value of the grabbed property. This law also provides for the establishment of special courts to handle land-grabbing cases. In the ongoing Budget Session, the government has proposed amendments to the Andhra Pradesh Rights in Land and Pattadar Pass Books Act, 1971. The previous amendment, made by the YSRCP government in 2022, had designated the District Revenue Officer as the appellate authority for grievances related to record of rights. The Naidu government, however, contends that this change led to delays and accessibility issues and has proposed to restore the earlier system where Sub Collectors or Revenue Divisional Officers act as the appellate authority.

Several administrative reforms have also been intro-

duced to modernise land registration. For instance, Sub-Registrars will now be placed at the same level as visitors instead of sitting at elevated positions. This symbolises a shift towards citizen-friendly governance. The government is also planning to allow citizens to book slots in advance for document registration at Sub-Registrar Offices. In addition, plans are under way to introduce an "anywhere registration" facility that will enable land transactions to be conducted from any location using advanced technology. The government has also undertaken a comprehensive review of freehold lands and the 22-A list, which restricts the sale of certain government-assigned lands. The YSRCP government had previously amended the Andhra Pradesh Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfers) Act, 1977, granting alienable rights to original assignees of government-allotted land. This amendment applied to agricultural lands assigned over 20 years ago and house sites assigned over 10 years ago. The Naidu government has re-verified these freehold land records and identified deviations in about 32% of the acres registered as freehold. Further irregularities were noted in more than 5 lakh acres out of a total of 13.5 lakh acres converted to freehold. District Collectors have been instructed to investigate these deviations and take necessary action. As part of a comprehensive land resurvey initiative, the government has updated guidelines and adopted advanced technology. While the YSRCP government had earlier launched a similar programme, the YSR Jagananna Shaswata Bhu Hakku Mariyu Bhu Raksha Padhakam, the NDA government has introduced modifications. It has also removed former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's photograph from Pattadar Passbooks and survey stones. And it has launched an inquiry into alleged irregularities in land allocations under housing schemes during the previous administration.

In the last nine months, the government has addressed 2.74 lakh resurvey-related grievances from 6,688 villages. In addition, 2.12 lakh revenue-related grievances received through the recently conducted Revenue Sadassulu programme have been resolved. As part of this initiative, officials visited villages to engage with people and resolve land-related issues at the grassroots level. To institutionalise these reforms, the State government constituted a Group of Ministers on March 5, chaired by Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad. While the government maintains that all these measures are intended to rectify past irregularities and modernise the system, their long-term impact on property rights and dispute resolution remains to be seen.

A meal for a ?: Karuna's Kitchen brings hope to Hyderabad's hungry

In the bustling lanes of Secunderabad's Regimental Bazar, where the iconic Manohar Talkies once stood, a bright yellow wooden door stands as a beacon of hope. Behind it, in a modest 100-square-foot space, Karuna's Kitchen has been quietly making a difference by offering meals to those in need for just one rupee. As the clock strikes noon on Tuesday, March 18, a crowd begins to gather outside. Among them are the homeless, daily wage workers, and others struggling to afford a basic meal. They wait patiently, knowing that in a few minutes, they will receive a token, one that signifies not charity but dignity. At exactly 12:30 p.m., Karuna's Kitchen starts serving warm meals, with no questions asked and no judgments made.

Launched a month ago, Karuna's Kitchen stands out as a unique initiative in Hyderabad and Telangana. The token system ensures that those in need do not feel they are receiving a handout but instead paying for a service, however small the amount. "There is always a demand for free food, but many hesitate to stand in queues for it. Auto drivers, cab drivers and daily wage workers often feel uncomfortable accepting charity openly," says George Rakesh Babu, the man behind this initiative. On the menu for the day was rice and sambar along with sliced cucumber, a simple yet nutritious meal. The menu varies daily, featuring dishes like khichdi, sambar rice, tomato rice, and raita, ensuring that regular visitors have a variety of options. "The idea is to keep it homely and nutritious. If we provide the same food every day, people might lose interest," Mr. George explains. Operating between 12:.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m., Karuna's Kitchen serves up to 300 people daily, distributing an equal number of tokens. One of the standout features of the initiative is its sustainable approach to serving food. Instead of disposable plates, meals are served on steel plates, which are washed and reused. "Conventional food donation programmes often struggle with cleanliness. I don't want to burden the municipality by using disposable plates and contributing to waste. We have 300 plates, and



after each meal, people place them in a tub to be washed," Mr. George says. Funding for Karuna's Kitchen comes entirely from individual donors who contribute small amounts, often on birthdays or anniversaries. "A single donation of ?1,000 can provide meals for 100 people," Mr. George shares. While he receives support from these generous donors, there is no government backing. However, he acknowledges government programmes like Annapurna canteen (a meal costs ?5) and sees his initiative as a complementary effort rather than competition.

As demand grows, Mr. George is considering expanding Karuna's Kitchen to other central locations in Hyderabad. "We have identified two to three suitable places and will begin operations there soon," he reveals. The kitchen currently operates from a space provided by a well-wisher, while the meals are prepared at Mr. George's home to maintain hygiene and quality standards. Despite its success, the initiative faces challenges, particularly in scaling up while maintaining sustainability. "The biggest challenge is accommodating the increasing number of people without turning anyone away. Donations in kind, like groceries, would be especially helpful in maintaining operations," Mr. George notes.

Student suicides nearly doubled in 10 years: calls for urgent action

GNS News Agency, March 21

The alarming trend of a surge in student suicides in the last ten years in India presents a pressing issue that calls for urgent action. The recent alleged suicide of a 20-year-old Nepali student at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) University, Bhubaneswar, followed by student unrest, is a stark reminder of the seriousness of the mental health issues in higher education.

It is not an isolated case, as student suicide incidents are reported frequently at various institutions across the country, including premier ones like the IITs and the JEE coaching centres in Kota. As per the latest report from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in 2022 alone, over 13,000 student suicides were reported, which implies a loss of an average of 35 young lives per day. Across the world, the largest cause of death among the youth is road accidents, whereas in India, it is suicides. Every life lost represents a tragic case of pain, despair, and unfulfilled aspirations of the youth. In order to highlight the urgency to address the critical issue, this article presents an overview of the trends in student suicides in India. It explores the root causes, examines the strategies, practices, and steps taken by various stakeholders to address the issue. It offers suggestions to move forward

As per the NCRB report on, 'Accidental deaths and suicides in India', published in 2022, overall suicides during the last decade (2012-22), have increased by 26%. The share of student suicides has gone up steeply by about 55%, from 4.91% in 2012 to 7.63% in 2022. Over the last decade, while the number of students enrolled in Higher Education has grown by 43% from 30.2 million in 2012 to 43.3 million in 2022, the number of student suicides practically doubled from 6,654 in 2012 to 13,044 in 2022. An analysis of the state-wise data reveals that the Southern Zone contributes 29% of the student suicides, followed by the Western Zone at 24%, reflecting the relative intensity of the

student population in the respective zones. Five states,

Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Odisha, together account for 46% of the total student

suicide cases in the country.

The above statistics are sourced from the NCRB, which uses police-recorded First Information Reports (FIRs) data. The actual numbers are estimated to be higher by about four times, because of possible under-reporting. This happens due to factors like social stigma and the criminalisation of attempted and assisted suicide under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code. Besides, there is a lack of a robust data collection system in rural areas, com-

While a detailed break-up of causes for student suicides is not available, a cursory analysis shows that major causes for student suicide are parental pressure for career choices, failure in examinations, ragging and bullying, financial stress, careers, caste discrimination, drug abuse, alcohol addiction, and failed relationships. In the age group of up to 18, examinations, particularly entrance examinations for professional courses, seem to be the major cause, whereas in the age group of 19 to 24, the other factors dominate. As per the NCRB report, 2039 suicide deaths in 2022 (about 16%) are attributed to fear of failure in examinations. particularly in competitive examinations. In India, academic excellence is held in high esteem and is viewed as a means of ensuring a successful future. There is enormous competition to gain admission into colleges and the media hype around the results, and the shame associated with the fear of failure pushes adolescents to suicide. Multiple factors are at play in examination failure suicides, which include low self-esteem, high expectations, impulsivity, over-anxious and over-ambitious parents, comparisons with peers, lack of support in the family, and more.SNEHA, an NGO working as a suicide prevention centre in Chennai, found a fourfold increase in calls and visits from suicidal students in the month of May when results of the public exams are

All you need to know about: cervical cancer



GNS News Agency, March 21

The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. Cervical cancer starts when the cells in the cervix begin to grow abnormally. These changes in the cells often take years to develop, which is why regular checkups are very important. Early changes, known as precancerous conditions, can be detected through a routine pap smear. Cervical cancer is a major health issue for women around the world. However, it is one of the easiest cancers to prevent and treat if diagnosed early. With the right knowledge about its causes, symptoms, and prevention, women can reduce the risk of cervical cancer. The main cause of cervical cancer is a virus called human papillomavirus (HPV). This virus spreads through sexual contact. Most people who get HPV never even know they have it because the body usually fights it off on its own. But sometimes, the virus doesn't go away and can cause abnormal changes in the cervix that might turn into cancer later.

Certain factors increase a woman's risk of cervical cancer. Unprotected sexual intercourse, smoking, hormonal contraceptives, and sexually transmitted diseases can all contribute to this risk.

In the early stages, cervical cancer usually doesn't cause symptoms, which is why regular screenings are vital. As it progresses, women might notice signs such as an unusual discharge or bleeding between periods, bleeding after sexual intercourse, or bleeding after menopause. Other symptoms can include pelvic pain, pain during sexual intercourse, heavier-than-usual periods, or unexplained weight loss. If you have any of these symptoms, it is recommended to see a doctor right away. Cervical cancer screening is essential for prevention and early detection. The two main tests used are the Papanicolaou (Pap) test and the HPV

screening. The pap test looks for abnormal changes in cervical cells, while the HPV screening checks for the virus that can cause these changes. Doctors recommend that women start getting pap tests at age 21 and continue every few years based on their age and medical history. For women aged 30 to 65, combining a pap test with an HPV test every five years is another effective option. Regular screenings can help catch any issues early, making treatment more successful and significantly reducing the risk of developing cervical cancer. When it comes to cervical cancer, one of the best ways to prevent it is by getting the HPV vaccine. This vaccine works best when given before exposure to the virus, usually between the ages of 9 and 12. However, it is still helpful for people up to age 45 and, in some cases, even older. Boys also receive the HPV vaccine, as it not only protects them from penile, anal, and throat cancers, but also contributes to reducing the overall transmission of the virus, benefiting public health.

Healthy habits also go a long way in reducing the risk of cervical cancer. Quitting smoking, eating a balanced diet, practicing safe sex, and staying physically active can all help. It is also crucial to follow up on any abnormal test results and get regular check-ups. If a woman is diagnosed with cervical cancer, treatment will depend on how far the cancer has progressed. In the early stages, surgery may be enough to remove the cancer. For more advanced cases, radiation therapy or chemotherapy (or both) may be given. These treatments work to destroy cancer cells and stop them from spreading. Being diagnosed with cervical cancer can feel overwhelming, but it is important to remember that many women recover and go on to lead full, healthy lives. Having support from family, friends, and healthcare providers can make a big difference. There are also many support groups and organisations that offer help and resources for women and their families during this time. Early detection through regular screenings, HPV vaccinations, and healthy lifestyle choices can significantly reduce risks. By staying informed about the importance of these measures, women can take proactive steps to protect their health and prevent cervical cancer. Scheduling regular screenings and discussing the HPV vaccine with your doctor are crucial actions to take. Early detection can lead to more effective treatments, improve outcomes and save lives. Together, we can work towards a future where cervical cancer is no longer a threat. Empower yourself today by prioritising your health and making informed decisions that can lead to a healthier tomorrow.

With high ultraviolet index reported over parts of Kerala, concerns rise over health impacts

GNS News Agency, March 21

Several districts in Kerala have been reporting a high ultraviolet index (UVI), which is the level of UV radiation from the sun on a scale of one to 11, over the past few days, raising concerns about its possible health impacts. According to the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA), Munnar in Idukki recorded a UVI of 12 and Konni in Pathanamthitta recorded 11 on March 17. Kottarakkara in Kollam and Changanassery in Kottayam reported 10, Ponnani in Malappuram recorded nine, and Thrithala in Palakkad eight. Beypore in Kozhikode, Kalamassery in Ernakulam, Vilappilsala in Thiruvananthapuram, and Chengannur in Alappuzha reported seven each. Mananthavady in Wayanad and Ollur in Thrissur recorded six each. The high UVI is recorded between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The World Health Organization says that a purple alert needs to be issued if the radiation level is at 11 and above (extreme), and there are increased health risks. If it is between eight and 10 (very high), a red alert is issued, calling for extra precautions. If the UV index is between six and seven (high), an orange alert is issued and precautions will have to be taken.

T. Jayakrishnan, public health expert, says that high exposure to UV rays may lead to a gradual loss of skin elasticity, cause premature ageing, wrinkling, and skin pigmentation. It can damage the skin, eye, and the body's defence mechanism. On the skin, it can lead to sun tan, sun burn, redness, swelling, blisters, allergic reactions, and itching. Photo-toxic reactions may occur in people who use certain cosmetic products, soaps, and herbal remedies. On a long-term basis, there is a possibility of skin cancer and melanoma, a type of tumour. UV ray exposure may also suppress the immunity, affecting the body's ability to defend certain diseases. There are two types of UV rays: UVA rays and UVB rays. The former penetrate deep into the skin and even to the blood vessels. Sun burn is mainly caused by UVB rays. They also stimulate melanin pigmentation, resulting in sun tan marks, which can last forever.

Dr. Jayakrishnan points out that a small amount of



UV rays could reach the retina of the eyes too. This penetration could be severe in the case of children. Prolonged exposure could damage the retina at a later stage. "Photokeratitis, a painful condition of the eye, and pterygium, a non-cancerous growth that occurs on the conjunctiva, are some of the other possibilities," he says.ldukki, Palakkad, and Malappuram had experienced high UVIs of 11 on March 14; Kollam recorded 10, and Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode had a UV index of nine.Dr. Jayakrishnan says that darkskinned people genetically have enough melanin to protect them from the sun. Wearing sunglasses would help. "Those working in sand banks, waterbodies are more at risk due to reflections. Fishermen and those engaged in the construction of buildings and roads need to be careful. Hats and UV protected umbrella can be used," he adds. According to a study published in the journal Environmental Monitoring and Assessment, covering the period between 2004 and 2022, more than 79% of the UV measurements in Kerala were in the 'very high' and 'extreme' categories. High values were noticed during the southwest monsoon and in the summer. Thrissur, Palakkad, parts of Ernakulam, Idukki, parts of Kollam, and Thiruvananthapuram were found to be more vulnerable in terms of high UV exposure. A cyclical increasing and decreasing pattern was shown, with peaks in March, April and September and lower indices in June, July and

Telangana health budget up by 8%, focus on dialysis and medical education

The Telangana government has allocated ?12,393 crore for the Health, Medical, and Family Welfare Department in the state budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, marking an increase of ?925 crore (8% increase) from the previous year's allocation of ?11,468 crore. The allocation also surpasses the ?Rs 12,161 crore budgeted by the BRS government in 2023-24. Presenting the budget on Wednesday (March 19, 2025), Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka underscored the government's commitment to strengthening the healthcare sector and enhancing services.Since December 2023, the government has disbursed ?1,215 crore to

various hospitals under the

Aarogyasri scheme, reflect-

ing a 50% increase com-

pared to previous alloca-

tions, he noted. The scheme

aims to provide uninter-

rupted healthcare access to

2.84 crore citizens across

Telangana. "Additionally, to



services.Medical education

and infrastructure develop-

ment have been given a

boost with the addition of 400

MBBS seats in newly estab-

lished medical colleges. The

government has also sanc-

tioned 16 new nursing col-

under the National Health Mission (NHM), the state government has ensured the timely release of its share, thereby maximising financial support from the central government," he said. As part of its efforts to improve critical care services, the state has expanded free dialysis facilities to 102 centres, benefiting over one lakh patients and alleviating the financial burden by 948 crore. To further

extend these services, 95 new dialysis centres have been sanctioned. Emergency medical response has also been bolstered with the deployment of 136 new ambulances in mandals that previously lacked such leges and 28 allied health sciences colleges, creating opportunities for 2,640 additional students to pursue medical education annually.

The government has committed ?2,700 crore for the construction of a modern

The government has committed ?2,700 crore for the construction of a modern Osmania General Hospital (OGH) medical facility on a 27-acre site, aiming to enhance healthcare services and upgrade infrastructure at the century-old institution, the minister said.

Rigorous fitness routine awaits Sunita Williams, Barry Wilmore on earth



The story so far: At around 3 am IST on March 19, a capsule bearing the astronauts Sunita Williams, Barry Wilmore, Aleksandr Gorbunov, and Nick Hague will splash down off the coast of Florida, US. The four will be returning from the International Space Station back to the earth. Of them, Ms. Williams and Mr. Wilmore will be wrapping up a roughly nine-month stay on the ISS, which they reached in June last year onboard Boeing's Starliner capsule. Mr. Gorbunov and Mr. Hague will be returning after a six-month stay onboard the ISS. NASA — which employs Mr. Hague, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Wilmore — has a regimen in place for the trio to follow now that they are back, to ensure they are in good health and are able to re-adapt to living with gravity after spending months in microgravity. (Mr. Gorbunov is from Russia's Roscosmos.)

How does extended spaceflight affect humans?

The ISS is in low-earth orbit and its occupants experience microgravity, i.e. a very small but non-zero gravitational force. This affects the body in many ways, including allowing fluids to flow more easily towards the brain, reducing the tension acting on muscles, and lowering bone density. These consequences have cascading effects of their own. For example, the lower bone density causes more minerals to be deposited in the kidneys instead, leading to a higher risk of kidney stones. Thus, astronauts like Ms. Williams and Mr. Wilmore maintain a strict routine of exercises and dieting onboard the ISS, tailored among other things to help increase the blood-cell regeneration rate, work the heart, and engage the brain. NASA and other space agencies also have crafted specific programmes to make sure astronauts don't become stressed or anxious by their workload or by the confined space they're forced to occupy for months at a time. While more and more people have gone to space with each new decade, the data about the effects of spaceflight on their bodies and minds is insufficient to make proper conclusions with. This is because the number of spacefaring individuals is still much smaller than in a clinical trial; human bodies can differ on a variety of parameters; and different missions have different spaceflight profiles. Many agencies are currently pursuing programmes to systematically study astronauts' health, including a standardised set of tests and benchmarks.

How are astronauts monitored in space?

In September 2024, the Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer at NASA released revised standards that specify the medical tests and checkups astronauts must undergo to stay fit before, during, and after spaceflight. The standards also say how astronauts should be treated once they return to the earth after either short (less than 30 days) or long (more than 30 days) missions. NASA regularly flies long missions: it rotates the crew onboard the ISS once every six months, for example. The standards also specify what tests and checkups need to be conducted for astronauts flying on private missions. One example of this is the upcoming Axiom Mission 4, which will carry a crew of four on a 16-day mission to the ISS. One of the crew members will be Indian astronaut-designate Shubhanshu Shukla.

According to the standards document, "The operational medical monitoring requirements for pre-flight, in-flight, and post-flight phases are used to establish flight readiness, establish baselines, effectively guide in-flight countermeasures and assessments, and guide rehabilitation of crew members to their baseline health status following spaceflight."In long-duration missions, astronauts like Ms. Williams and Mr. Wilmore are required to evaluate themselves two weeks, three months, six months, and nine months after launch and submit their reports to the crew medical officer. There will be a private medical conference every day for the first week, then once a week, as well as before and after spacewalks. During spacewalks, their ECG and heart rate will be monitored. There will also be a hearing assessment once every three months and ocular assessments after one, three, six, and nine months. The body mass will be measured a week after launch, then monthly. The astronaut's blood and urine will be tested six months after launch and as and when clinically indicated, and they will be screened for deep-vein thrombosis and blood-flow anomalies one and two months after launch as well as 42 days before the return flight. In addition, the astronauts will be monitored for their strength and conditioning and their exposure to radiation.

How are astronauts rehabilitated post-flight?

Once Mr. Gorbunov, Mr. Hague, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Wilmore splash down on March 19 and are retrieved, they will need to undergo rigorous post-flight rehabilitation. This includes a slew of medical tests and physical rehabilitation procedures. According to NASA, "Post-flight reconditioning is unique for each astronaut and varies by individual. While most crew members reach their preflight fitness baseline within the first 45 days of returning to earth, it is not uncommon for NASA to extend reconditioning programs to meet an astronaut's specific needs and the pace of recovery." According to a chapter in the 2020 book 'Principles of Clinical Medicine for Space Flight', astronauts who have been in space for 20 days were able to regain their pre-flight fitness levels in a week.

On the day they return, crew members will undergo a physical exam, a neurological assessment (which includes checking for headaches, vertigo, nystagmus, and dynamic stability), resting and ambulatory ECG, eye tests, checks of their skin, blood and urine tests, and tests to check for symptoms that appear when standing straight but not reclining (orthostatic tolerance). They will also have follow-up physical exams three days, one or two weeks, and two months after the descent. There will be follow-up tests on many of these counts as well as tests conducted according to the clinical indications. Depending on the parameter that needs to be checked, the tests are required to be conducted by the crew surgeon, the deputy crew surgeon or the partner flight surgeon. A mission psychologist may also perform psychological checks at one and 10 days after the return

What does physical rehabilitation entail?

The medical tests are accompanied by physical treatments to make sure the crew members' bodies are able to readjust to the earth's gravity after a long duration spent in microgravity. The corresponding facilities are available at, among other places, the Johnson Space Centre in Houston and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, both in Texas. Just as their in-flight routines were carefully planned by experts, Ms. Williams and Mr. Wilmore will follow a pre-planned routine on the ground until they have recovered their pre-flight fitness levels. The latter routine includes, among other things, measures to minimise musculoskeletal and spinal-cord injuries, to relieve stiff muscles and nausea, and improve bone and muscle strength. In 2024, four experts with the Indian Air Force published a paper in the Indian Journal of Aerospace Medicine, where they detailed the post-flight rehabilitation of an astronaut after six months onboard the ISS. According to this paper, the crew surgeon, the flight surgeon, and a physiotherapist may assess the need for massage therapy for crew members from the day of their return. In the subsequent week, crew members undergo a series of "physical reconditioning" exercises for two hours every day: warm-up exercises on elliptical, rowing and bicycle trainers; tasks to exercise the back and lower limbs; activities to coordinate the limbs and improve their stability and the gait; posture exercises like throwing a ball while walking; and stretching. In the week after, the exercises expand to include jogging and playing ball-games

According to a 2011 technical report published by NASA, "The post-flight reconditioning program is designed to stress the body systems that affect the following: aerobic capacity, muscular strength, power, endurance, stamina, bone, balance, agility, coordination, orthostatic tolerances, proprioception, neurovestibular function and flexibility. "Every day, the medical and physiotherapeutic personnel have a private conference where they assess each crew member's progress and plan activities for the next day. Once a crew member has returned to their pre-flight fitness levels, the flight medical issues a discharge and allows the individual to return to normal duties. According to the technical report, "After completing post-flight reconditioning, ... astronauts have regained, and in most cases improved upon, their pre-flight baseline condition."

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

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

In the study, published in the journal Nature Medicine, older adults who were exposed to seasonal flu viruses that circulated before 1968 were found to be more likely to have antibodies that bind to the H5N1 avian flu virus. "We know that early childhood influenza exposures can elicit immune responses that last a lifetime," said Scott Hensley, Professor of Microbiology at the varsity. "We found that antibody responses that were primed by H1N1 and H3N2 viruses decades ago can cross-react to H5N1 avian viruses circulating today. Most of these cross-reactive antibodies cannot prevent infections, but they will likely limit disease if we have an H5N1 pandemic," he added. H5N1 viruses have circulated in birds for many years, but a new version — clade 2.3.4.4b H5N1 virus — emerged more recently and has since spread among cattle. This current H5N1 strain

does not bind well to receptors in the human upper airway. but widespread circulation in mammals could lead to mutations that help the virus infect human airway cells and increase transmission. If this occurs, H5N1 could potentially start spreading from human to human. Current influenza vaccines primarily elicit antibodies that recognise hemagglutinin proteins and prevent them from infecting a person's cells. The team tested blood samples from over 150 people born between 1927 and 2016 for antibodies targeting the stalk proteins of different influenza viruses, including H5N1. They found that blood samples from older adults born before 1968 who were likely first exposed to H1N1 or H2N2 in childhood had higher levels of antibodies that could bind to the stalk of the H5N1 virus. They found that an individual's birth year was closely linked to the amount of H5N1-fighting antibodies in their blood. Young children who were not exposed to seasonal flu viruses possessed low levels of antibodies that could fight H5N1. Hensley said that in cases of an H5N1 pandemic, all age groups will likely be highly susceptible. But, the highest disease burden may be in children. "If this is the case, children should be prioritised for H5N1 vaccinations," the expert said.

Trade will grow despite protectionism, phased approach in FTAs key: Commerce Secretary



Commerce Secretary Sunil Bharthwal said Wednesday that trade will remain a key driver of economic growth despite rising protectionist policies across the globe. He added that adopting a phased approach by signing mini trade agreements with trading partners can help avoid prolonged negotiations that often lead to businesses losing interest in these extended deal.

India has been in talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) with the UK and the EU for over two years, amid significant differences between the partners on a number of issues, particularly labour and environmental standards. New Delhi has also begun discussions with Washington for a deal under the second Donald Trump administration after talks failed during his first term. "There are issues related to protectionism and regulation that inhibit trade. But trade is going to grow because that is the need of nations. You cannot grow your Gross domestic product (GDP) without growth in trade.

And for India, trade is going to be an engine for growth," Bharthwal said while speaking at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) India-LAC Business Conclave. When we look at free trade agreements, sometimes they are so time-consuming that businesses lose interest. So we are also reviewing some of these issues in the [Commerce] department and we are talking to our partners who are negotiating FTAs with us... why can't we first look at an early tranche? Let there be some kind of outcome," he said. Bharthwal said that India aims to strengthen trade ties with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region and double trade with the region to \$100 billion, adding that the LAC region, with its \$3.6 trillion trade volume, presents vast opportunities for collaboration

"We are reviewing our FTA strategy to prioritise core trade issues such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and regulatory hurdles. Our experience with global partners like the EU and the UK has shown that focusing on key trade aspects in the initial phases can yield faster results," he said. India has already signed preferential trade agreements with MERCOSUR and Chile and is in talks with Peru for a free trade agreement. Bharthwal said that by adopting a phased approach, India and the LAC region could achieve meaningful trade outcomes more efficiently. "India's automobile industry is diverse, manufacturing everything from two-wheelers to high-end tractors. There are tremendous opportunities to integrate supply chains with LAC countries. India's expertise in generic medicines can make healthcare more affordable in the LAC region, and with growing demand for medical devices, this sector is ripe for collabora-

Markets jump 1.5% on positive global cues, bargain hunting; rupee rallies

stock marketsAdditionally, India's better-than-expected trade deficit, China's consumption boost, and value buying at crucial support levels further bolstered market confidenceDomestic stock markets broke out of a weeklong consolidation on Tuesday, surging nearly 1.5 per cent and reinforcing the recovery momentum. The BSE Sensex jumped by 1,131 points to regain the 75,000 level at 75,301.26 and the NSE Nifty index gained 325 points to 22,834.30 in bargain hunting at cheap valuations amid positive global cues.

The broader market also remained bullish with Midcap Index rising 2.10 per cent and the Small-cap Index soaring 2.73 per cent. The rally was led by sectors like real estate, auto, capital goods, consumer durables, power and banking. Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP – research & advisory, Master Capital Services, said investor sentiment remained upbeat, driven by improving global market conditions and rising optimism over a potential truce deal between Russia and Ukraine, as the US and Russian Presidents are scheduled to meet on Tuesday. Further, weakening US economic data and increasing expectations of Federal Reserve rate cuts have also boosted the market sentiment. Analysts now expect the Reserve Bank of India to cut Repo rate by another 25 basis points in the April policy review.

Additionally, India's better-than-expected trade deficit, China's consumption boost, and value buying at crucial support levels further bolstered market confidence. "The Nifty 50 is expected to extend its gains toward 23,000–23,100, and a decisive breakout above this zone could propel the index further toward 23,500–23,800. On the downside, 22,350–22,300 remains the immediate support zone, providing a strong cushion for any pullbacks," he said. "Global factors such as the Federal Reserve meeting and geopolitical uncertainties may introduce intermittent volatility. A 'buy on dips' strategy remains prudent, with focus on sectors/themes that align with the prevailing market trend," said Ajit Mishra, SVP, research, Religare Broking.

Softer-than-expected US retail sales data fueled expectations that the Federal Reserve might consider inter-



est rate cuts later this year. Additionally, European markets opened on a positive note, further boosting sentiment. Meanwhile, the rupee extended its gaining streak for the third consecutive session on Tuesday, appreciating 25 paise to close at 86.56 against the US dollar. The rally was supported by strong domestic equity markets and a weaker greenback amid disappointing US economic data. A major factor behind the rupee's rally is India's latest current account data, which showed a surplus in February, largely attributed to a trade surplus and stable remittances.

On the macro front, the export performance has been volatile this fiscal. Merchandise exports have been trending down for four months. Geopolitical uncertainties, including the tariff hikes proposed by the Donald Trump administration in the US, continue to pose risks. Imports have outpaced exports so far in fiscal 2025, causing the trade deficit to widen. Crisil said the US's proposed tariff hike on Chinese goods, coupled with the expected slowdown in the Chinese economy, will trigger aggressive exports from there to other Asian markets, including India. The merchandise trade deficit, thus, bears watching. That said, the surplus in services trade and robust flow of remittances provide a cushion and should keep the current account in the safe zone. "We project current account deficit at 1 per cent of the gross domestic product in fiscal 2025 and 1.3 per cent in fiscal 2026," it said.

Chip giant Infineon looks to double India headcount by 2030, focus on R&D



German semiconductor giant Infineon Technologies is looking to double its India headcount to 5,000 employees in the next five years, focusing primarily on research and development, even as the company has no immediate plans of committing to manufacturing in India, a top company official said Tuesday. Andreas Urschitz, CMO and management board member at Infineon, said that the company currently has 2,500 employees in India, working on R&D, which the company aims to double by 2030. Infineon has more than 58,000 employees worldwide, with most of them based in the APAC region. The company is a major player in supplying chips to the automobile industry.

"We are doing lots of innovation in India and intend to heavily invest and grow our R&D base here...in terms of our long-term planning towards 2030, we intend to double the number of people in India," he told reporters. However, he also clarified that Infineon has no near-term plans of setting up a manufacturing base in India, but did not rule out the possibility in the future, depending on how the country's semiconductor ecosystem shapes up, and geopolitical factors.

This means that the company is unlikely to participate in the \$10 billion India Semiconductor Mission, under which the government has so far attracted investment worth \$18 billion. The Tata-PSMC fab, being built at a cost of roughly \$11 billion, is among the five semiconductor projects the government has greenlit under the India Semiconductor Mission. Apart from the fab, four assembly and testing plants by US-based Micron Technology, the Tatas, Murugappa Group's CG Power in partnership with Japan's Renesas, and Kaynes Semicon, are also under construction.Instead, the company will focus on local partnerships in the country. It recently announced an agreement with Mohali-based CDIL Semiconductors, under which Infineon will supply bare

die wafers to CDIL, which the latter will package into discrete and module semiconductor products for Indian customers and sell it under the CDIL brand. Urschitz also revealed that Infineon has signed a similar agreement with Kaynes Semicon. The government is currently working on the contours of the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission, with the design and outline of the scheme finalised and discussions with the industry underway, IT Secretary S Krishnan had said earlier this month.

Krishnan said that under the second phase of the ISM, the government will look to provide some support to raw materials, equipment, gases and speciality chemicals needed in semiconductor manufacturing. Last August, The Indian Express had reported that the Centre had created a fresh \$15 billion blueprint for the second phase of the India Semiconductor Mission. Under the renewed scheme, the government was planning to offer capital support for raw materials and gases used in chip manufacturing, this paper had reported. The first phase had an outlay of \$10 billion, and was approved in December 2021 to kickstart India's chip industry. Soumyarendra Barik is Special Correspondent with The Indian Express and reports on the intersection of technology, policy and society.

Uber India narrows losses to Rs 89 crore, expenses surge 26 per cent

New Delhi: Ride-hailing major Uber India continued to struggle with profitability despite strong revenue growth, as rising expenses weighed heavily on its financial performance, its latest financials showed. The company's total expenditure surged 26.4 per cent to Rs 3,977 crore in FY24, driven largely by employee costs, legal fees, advertising and operational expenses.

Employee costs alone accounted for nearly 68 per cent of overall spending, growing by 29.4 per cent to Rs 2,690 crore in the fiscal year ending March 2024.

However, Uber India managed to reduce its losses significantly. The company's losses shrank by 71.4 per cent to Rs 89 crore in FY24 from Rs 311 crore in the previous fiscal, as per its financials.

Sebi clears Korean major LG's mega IPO



After Hyundai Motor India, another Korean giant is planning to list its shares on the Indian exchanges. LG Electronics India has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to proceed with its initial public offering (IPO). While the company has not indicated the IPO size, market estimates are that the company is likely to mop up around Rs 15,000 crore. Hyundai had raised Rs 27,000 crore from the IPO and listed its shares in India in October 2024.

The LG IPO comprises an offer for sale consisting of up to 10.18 crore equity shares by its parent company, LG Electronics. This move marks a significant step for LG Elec-

tronics India, a subsidiary established in 1997, which has been a consistent leader in the Indian home appliances and consumer electronics market. Sebi issued observation letter to LG Electronics India on March 13. The issuance of observation letter means the company can launch its IPO within the next on year from the receipt of the said letter.

LG had filed its IPO papers with the SEBI on December 6, 2024. The entire IPO proceeds will go to the Korean promoter, and the Indian company will not receive any money from the IPO. Hence, the main object is to achieve the benefits of listing equity shares on the stock exchanges.LG Electronics India reported a revenue of Rs 21,352 crore for the fiscal year 2024, up from Rs 19,868.24 crore in 2023, and a profit after tax of Rs 1,511 crore, reflecting a 12.35 per cent increase from the previous fiscal year. It has maintained its dominance in product categories such as washing machines, refrigerators, panel televisions, inverter air conditioners, and microwaves. It has remained the market leader for 13 consecutive years by value market share in the offline channel.LG Electronics is recognised as the leading single-brand home appliances company by revenue for 2023. The company boasts a vast distribution network with 36,401 B2C touchpoints and 949 authorised service centres across India. These facilitate same-day installation, repair, and maintenance services, enhancing

Reliance Capital finally comes under Hinduja fold

RELIANCE CAPITALIIHL chairman Ashok Hinduja said Reliance General Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life will go for the public listing in 2-3 years and the word 'Reliance' will be removedAfter completing the transaction to acquire debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCap) by transferring the entire bid amount to lenders, IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL), the new owner of the company, will stick mainly to insurance companies and most probably exit from many of the remaining small entities in the RCap group.

IIHL chairman Ashok Hinduja said Reliance General Insurance and Reliance Nippon Life will go for the public listing in 2-3 years and the word 'Reliance' will be removed. With regard to subsidiaries, he said there are about 39-40 entities of Reliance Capital and the new management would divest many of them as they are mostly small shell entities with small businesses. IIHL has reviewed whether it will keep 39-40 units of the recently acquired company. The decision will be taken by the board, Hinduja said, adding that it will exit RCap units other than insurance firms, broking and asset reconstruction business. After this acquisition, IIHL intends to expand its banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) portfolio. IIHL, a Mauritius-based investment company, is the holding company of the Hinduja Group, and is led by Ashok Hinduja. In April 2023, IIHL emerged as the successful resolution applicant by winning the bid for Reliance Capital under the Corporate Insolvency Resolu-

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tion Process (CIRP) with an offer of Rs 9,650 crore. The financial services firm has 1.28 lakh employees and the new management would protect the interest of employees to the extent possible, Hinduja said. The management transfer of RCAP is likely to take place on Wednesday. "The transaction from our side is over. As we are speaking, money is moving from one escrow to another," Hinduja said. The value of the Reliance Capital business on a conservative basis would be Rs 20,000 crore. Reliance Capital was placed under RBI-appointed administration in November 2021 due to governance lapses and payment defaults associated with the Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group. The central bank appointed Nageswara Rao Y as the administrator, who subsequently invited bids for the company's takeover in February 2022.

Facebook hired fall guy for arrests in India; was 'outfoxed' by official on Free Basics, new book claims



Facebook's international offices have had "visits" and "raids" —armed and unarmed— in many countries, including in India, with the social media giant hiring "an ex—police captain" to "go to jail in a clash between Facebook and the Indian government," a new memoir, written by a former Facebook staffer, has claimed. The memoir, Careless People: A Cautionary Tale of Power, Greed, and Lost Idealism, was written by Sarah Wynn-Williams, who worked at Facebook from 2011 to 2017. Meta recently scored a win against the memoir as it secured an emergency arbitrator's decision that bars the author from promoting the book. At the time of writing, though, the book was available for purchase in India on e-commerce sites.

"This ruling affirms that Sarah Wynn Williams' false and defamatory book should never have been published. This urgent legal action was made necessary by Williams, who more than eight years after being terminated by the company, deliberately concealed the existence of her book project and avoided the industry's standard fact-checking process in order to rush it to shelves after waiting for eight years," Andy Stone, a Meta spokesperson, said in a post on X."This book is a mix of out-of-date and previously reported claims about the company and false accusations about our executives. Eight years ago, Sarah Wynn-Williams was fired for poor performance and toxic behavior, and an investigation at the time determined she made misleading and unfounded allegations of harassment. Since then, she has been paid by anti-Facebook activists and this is simply a continuation of that work. Whistleblower status protects communications to the government, not disgruntled activists trying to sell books," a Meta spokesperson said in a statement to The Indian Express. Wynn-Williams, who was global director of public policy at Meta until eight years ago, said in her book that as part of her work, she had to frequently travel to places like India, Brazil and South Korea, and described clashes the company had with government regulators in some of these countries. "In India the situation's so bad, Facebook's leadership hires an ex-police captain who's been given some boring, official-sounding title but is understood by the policy team to be someone who 'would be able to handle an arrest situation well'—that is, go to jail in a clash between Facebook and the Indian government," the memoir claimed. The book has also detailed Meta's (then called Facebook) lobbying efforts in India to ensure the continuation of Free Basics, a programme to provide limited access to some websites to low-income users, which was prohibited in India in 2016 for being a violation of Net Neutrality, the concept that all traffic on the Internet should be treated equally by Internet providers.

Wynn-Williams claimed that Meta's founder Mark Zuckerberg personally wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to arrange a meeting to discuss about Free Basics. The company's then chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg wrote to the minister in charge of the internet. The memoir

also details the big budget campaign that Facebook undertook, including advertising campaigns across TV, newspapers, cinemas, radio, and billboards in India, spending tens of millions of dollars for advertising on Facebook itself, and SMS campaigns, to push users to support Free Basics "Their strategy—laid out in an 'India Action Plan'—calls for them to galvanise actual (or at least the appearance of) public support," the memoir said (Italics in the memoir, per the author). "The government's Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRAI) started to flex its significant power and announced it was going to look into programs like Internet.org (Free Basics's previous name) and get the public to weigh in on whether they should be banned," the memoir claimed.

"Sheryl tried to reassure the Facebook leadership: Our policy team is directly engaged with the government, include [sic] Prime Minister Modi's office. We're lucky this is happening in a place where we have very deep senior relationships in the government, but it's still going to be hard. If we lose this in India it will send all the wrong signals in Latin America," Wynn-Williams quoted Sanddberg as saying. Zuckerberg, meanwhile, wanted Facebook to create "lists of adversaries," whether they're companies, individuals, organisations, or governments to know "how we can use the platform and tools we have to win against these adversaries... He wants us to invent ways to use the platform and the algorithm to pressure them". Facebook built a "megaphone" on its platform for users who wanted to support Free Basics, as "Mark had told the team to leverage every tool Facebook has, so all Indian Facebook users now see a pop-up when they log in". "To create virality, the team designed it so that clicking on this would also notify a user's friend list that they had submitted a letter to the regulator," the memoir claimed. This feat of engineering resulted in nearly 17 million submissions to TRAI by January 7, 2016. But, on Sunday, January 10, there's "shock" when TRAI announced that it's received only 1.4 million submissions.

Registrations of homes priced over Rs. 1 cr rise by 1 per cent in Hyderabad, overall registrations witness 16 per cent decline

Hyderabad: In Hyderabad, registrations of homes priced above Rs.1 crore rose by 1 per cent year-on-year (YoY), even as overall registrations declined 16 per cent YoY.Knight Frank India's latest assessment released on Wednesday while highlighting Hyderabad's ongoing shift toward premium homes also documented that in recent months, registrations for homes priced below Rs. 50 lakh, which still makes up for more than half of the total transactions, have steadily declined. In February 2025, this segment saw a 20 per cent YoY drop.

A strong shift toward premiumisation has emerged and homes priced at Rs.1 crore and above increased by 1 per cent YoY, accounting for 18 per cent of total registrations in February 2025. This comes despite overall registration numbers being higher in February 2024, said Knight Frank India.

Ranga Reddy SATURDAY 22 MARCH 2025 **INDIAN CHRONICLE**

'It sounds like Harry Brook is the first player to do...Every player would like more money': Michael Clarke supports BCCI's stance



GNS News Agency, March 21

English cricketer, Harry Brook has been banned for two years from the Indian Premier League after pulling off from the upcoming season after being brought by the Delhi Capitals for 6.25 crores at the auction. Brook has cited time to prepare for his national commitments and to take a break from cricket as reasons to pull off from the IPL

After Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid now former Australian skipper Michael Clarke would back BCCI's decision to ban Brook from the tournament for the next couple of years. "It sounds like Harry Brook is the first player to do that but I understand why the IPL would do that. Every player would like more money but once you go into that auction and you're bought you've got to respect that and understand that you can't just pull out because you haven't been paid the amount that you want," Clarke said speaking on Beyond23 Cricket Podcast. "He is a wonderful player and I have no doubt that he will be part of the IPL, if he wants to, moving forward. But he's probably got his reasons. That's the other thing. Every individual will have to make this choice – IPL or domestic competition. You have the choice to go in," added Clarke."I can't remember whether it was the first year or the second, but I pulled out because somebody in my family passed away. I come home to be there for the family, funeral and all that. So if there are personal reasons, I think the IPL will understand and respect that but if it's because you're not getting the money you want, they are going to crack down on that. And you have to respect that," Clarke would recall.

Usman Khawaja attends F1 race after missing Sheffield Shield fixture citing to hamstring injury stirs up controversy

GNS News Agency, March 21

Australian opener Usman Khawaja has tangled himself into a bit of a pickle after being photographed at the F1 Grand Prix at Albert Park. The southpaw who missed the Sheffield Shield fixture for Queensland against South Australia citing a hamstring injury came under fire after getting spotted at Melbourne over the weekend. Queensland's Head of Elite Cricket Joe Dawes told News Corp "Our medical staff said all the way through he has been available for se-

"That is my understanding from Cricket Australia staff as well. No hamstring issues as far as we are concerned. I go off our medical staff and there is no reason why he could not have played the last game. It's just disappointing he didn't play a game for Queensland when he had an opportunity to," Dawes added."I have got a bunch of blokes here that all want to play. I think we are disappointed he did not play the game against South Australia. That's the decision he made and he has communicated some of the reasons for that in the public. Hopefully he will make that decision to make himself available (for the final) for next week and we will make that decision on Friday." Dawes further



said. Though Queensland has made it to the final with a draw Dawes would be hesitant to confirm if Khawaja would be selected for the final game. Speaking on SENQ "I'm glad I didn't have my television on (to see him at the F1), Queensland Cricket Deputy Chair Ian Healy revealed. "Cricket Australia should feel a little under the pump with this, I spoke with them, and they weren't aware of Queensland's concerns with him not playing for Queensland, they wish we would have rung them earlier.

Virat Kohli's 2008 ICC U19 World Cup winning teammate Tanmay Srivastava becomes umpire for IPL 2025 season



GNS News Agency, March 21

Virat Kohli came into the limelight after winning the 2008 U-19 World Cup at Malaysia in 2008. While there have been a few players from that batch from India and other countries who have made it to their respective national sides and have achieved remarkable success. One of Kohli's teammates who did ply his trade playing for various teams over his career is going to officiate as an umpire for the upcoming Indian Premier League 2025 season. Tanmay Srivastava who played a crucial 46-run knock in the final of that world cup is all set to do umpiring for the upcoming IPL season. "A true player never leaves the field—just changes the game. Wishing Tanmay Srivastava the best as he dons a new hat with the same passion!" A Tweet from the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA) read.

The left-hander, who had scored 262 runs in just 6 ches at an average of 52.40 in the 2008 edition of the U-19 World Cup, played for Uttarakhand in first-class cricket and also led them. He has played 90 first-class matches and scored 4918 runs so far."I was an 11 year old when I joined the Green Park cricket hostel to focus on cricket, that was my only passion. At 13, I represented India U-15 and it was a dream come true when I wore the Indian jersey. Year 2008 was all about winning the U-19 World Cup, and memories about holding the National Flag proudly still makes me go weak in my knees. I consider myself lucky to have played alongside and shared the dressing room with the greats of Indian and International cricket and I am humbled at how, even today most of them are just a call away, sharing their experiences to help me learn," Tanmay would say at the time retirement from professional cricket.

You don't have to captain like Virat Kohli: Aakash Chopra's suggestion to Rajat Patidar



GNS News Agency, March 21

Going into the Indian Premier League 2025 all eyes will be on new Royal Challengers Bengaluru skipper Rajat Patidar. Though the middle-order bat has done well in the last few seasons for the side, how he will lead as captain will be a thing to watch out for especially with someone like Virat Kohli in the side who has led both India and RCB in the past for a long time. "The biggest opportunity is for Rajat Patidar. What will you expect from him? He did well for MP (Madhya Pradesh), took the team to the final in SMAT (Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy), and the team looked towards you and said they are planning for the next four to five years. However, do they actually invest that much? That question always remains," Aakash Chopra said speaking on his YouTube channel. Though RCB managed to reach the final of the IPL three times in the history of franchise they have fumbled at the final hurdle. Last year they did the impossible in the second half of the tournament winning seven out of their last eight games but got knocked out in the Eliminator by Rajasthan Royals. "They have a legacy of good captains. Don't think what Virat Kohli would have done. When a player of such huge stature is part of the team, you look towards him. He has also captained this team for eight overs. So you suddenly think what Virat would have done

in a particular situation," Chopra added. "There would be a

lot of pressure on you if you go with that thinking because you will never chart your own course. It's important to make your own way. Virat Kohli is a part of that team, you don't have to captain like Virat Kohli. So opportunities for him. He can actually create history. If he does what has not happened to date - Wow," Chopra observed.

Why Suryakumar Yadav and not Hardik Pandya will captain MI vs CSK in Chennai?

GNS News Agency, March 21

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya on Wednesday confirmed that he will not be present to lead the fivetime champions in their highly-anticipated Indian Premier League (IPL 2025) season opener against Chennai Super Kings at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sunday evening. Speaking at a Mumbai Indians press conference ahead of the season, Pandya said that he will have to miss the game with teammate and India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav taking over the reins at Chepauk. "Surya will be the ideal choice when I am not there," said Pandya.Why will Pandya miss the CSK vs MI IPL 2025 match? After MI's group-stage exit last year, Pandya was banned for the slow-over rate offence against the Lucknow Super Giants during the team's last outing. It was the third time in 14 games where MI had failed to maintain the overrates, resulting in the skipper's ban, an INR 30 lakh match fee fine and the rest of the playing XII, including the Impact Player, were either fined Rs 12 lakh of 50 percent of their match fees

We might just see that 300-run mark breached in this IPL season: AB de Villiers



GNS News Agency, March 21

Since the introduction of impact player rule in the Indian Premier League the scores have gone up quite significantly. Batting lineups who used to have anchoring-role at the top now have been reluctant to have them anymore and have given free licenses to all the batters to go all guns blazing, there have been instances in the last couple of years where the personnel has been altered when the batter lacked the skill set to play with a certain tempo right from ball one. "The impact player rule has changed the game a lot. As we have seen from some players' comments, it frees up the top three batters so they can take more risks. In a way, it feels a bit unfair, and I've shared some criticism about that. Fielding restrictions allowing only two fielders outside the ring, along with the added freedom for top-order batters, make things complicated for the bowlers. But it is exciting for the batters. We might just see that 300-run mark breached in this IPL season," AB de Villiers said on Jio Hotstar. The 18th edition of the season will kick off with Royal Challengers Bengaluru taking on defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens on Saturday.

The major protagonists from last yearWhile the Impact Player has indeed upscaled scoring rates throughout the 20 overs, batting in the Powerplay and death overs has seen the biggest spike from the previous edition. Among the mavericks are three teams who were among the bottom four in 2023 - Kolkata Knight Riders, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals, who have rejigged their combinations.KKR's charge has been led by the unlikely opening pair of Sunil Narine and Phil Salt. Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma have formed a potent concoction up top for SRH. Aussie sensation Jake Fraser-McGurk has formed the core of Delhi's early charge.

Mahela Jayawardene shares latest update on MI's star pacer ahead of IPL 2025

GNS News Agency, March 21

Mumbai Indians (MI) head coach Mahela Jayawardene opened up on his team's Jasprit Bumrah situation as the India speedster continues to be out on the sidelines from the back-related injury issued he picked up in January during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia.Bumrah has not made any significant moves in regaining his full fitness as yet and the MI pacer was also out of action when India lifted the Champions Trophy title in Dubai under Rohit Sharma two weeks back. Jayawardene said MI are awaiting the updates on Bumrah with anticipation as he charters his recovery at the National Cricket Academy's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru. "Jasprit is with NCA, and just started the process there. Will await their feedback on him. Progress will be monitored on day-to-day basis. Not having him is a challenge and the world's best bowler is always an advantage for us," Jayawardene told reporters in Mumbai on Wednesday.

The former Sri Lanka captain also said that the team will attempt to tweak and shuffle combinations early in the tournament without Bumrah. "He gives us a different element for trying things, so that in the early season we can experiment."Bumrah hasn't played since the fifth Test against Australia in Sydney in January, when he walked off



for scans on Day 2. Former MI bowling coach Shane Bond had recently cautioned India and Bumrah of not bearing excessive workload in the future. "He's too valuable for the next World Cup and stuff. So you'd be looking at five Tests in England, I wouldn't want to be playing him in any more than two in a row. Coming out of the back end of the IPL into a Test match is going to be a huge risk. And so how do they manage that is going to be key," Bond told ESPNcricinfo. "So that's hard because he is your best bowler, but if he has another injury in the same spot, that could be a career-ender, potentially, because I'm not sure you can have surgery on that spot again."

Struggle against Autism and career high of World number 33: How US tennis player Jenson Brooksby tackled brain condition



GNS News Agency, March 21

Former world number 33 and the youngest American to reach the US Open fourth round in the last 23 years, 24year-old Jenson Brooksby has opened up about his struggles with autism and the challenges he faces while coping with it on the professional front. The American tennis player, who was out of the professional circuit for the last two years due to an injury as well a doping ban due to missing drugs tests, spoke about his time as a young child with autism.

"My whole life with my parents, it wasn't something you are very comfortable sharing because there could be consequences - especially when I was younger. But I've learned as I've grown up that even with people close to me, the response is very casual and not much is thought about it. I think my desire to be able to help other people with it in certain scenarios - say, if they are trying to become a professional player - was bigger than any negative outcome I could have thought of. I really hope that future players, whether they are vocal about it or not, they at least know it's OK for them to struggle with it and hopefully be able to explain why," Brooksby told BBC Sport.

The American tennis player had received intensive therapy starting at the age of two years. The youngster, who was named after Formula driver Jenson Button by his parents, had made his Grand Slam debut with a wild card entry in the US Open in 2018. He lost to eventual quarterfinalist John Millman in the first round but the next three years saw him winning a first-round match in US Open in 2019 apart from three Challenger trophies and an ATP Tour final before he reached the guarter-final of the 2021 US Open where he lost to then world number on Novak Diokovic. His feat made him the youngest American to reach the US Open fourth round since Andy Roddick achieved the same feat in 2002. "Sport was a big release for me. If I sit for a long time I can have a lot of energy bottled up, and so being a very active kid really lets it out. I always wanted to train to try to be good at something. Even at that age, I think I had that mindset of competing and to be good at something."

Nine months after the US Open quarter-final appearance, Brooksby reached his career-high world ranking of 33. But months later, the youngster was banned for 18 months by International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) The ban enforced due to Brooksby missing three out of competition drugs tests was reduced to 13 months followed by the youngster undergoing surgery on both wrists and a shoulder problem. Brooksby had told an independent tribunal that he had declined invitations to learn more about the anti-doping rules and the responsibility was delegated to his adviser Amrit Narasimhan. "I've had my agent keep track of where I will be every day, because it's hard for my brain to be able to focus well on many different things. It's a positive for me to be able to focus on a few simple things. But a downside is that there can be so many things going on for us players it's hard for my mind to be able to wrap around that. I have had so much time to reflect on it, and it's in the past. I'm pretty much at peace with it. I think all of us have things that we have been a little disappointed in, and it can be pretty frustrating, but I don't really think about it any more. If it ever pops into my mind I just use it as a reminder to try to get better," said the youngster. The American is currently ranked 937 in the world and had lost in the third round in BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells with a loss against eventual winner Jack Draper. Brooksby shared about his state of mind at present. "If, for example, I have any doubts about my body on court, or I'm feeling a little bit more pain, I will always tell myself I am healthy and strong. I'm able to keep my focus pretty well in higher pressure moments and not get distracted by external things like the crowd, the wind, it people are standing up. I'm a lot better now than I was four or five years ago. Make no mistake, Jenson is a highly intelligent individual. I needed to make changes to communicate effectively, and be more patient with my communication.

Gill goes down memory lane to recollect first time he saw Sachin Tendulkar

Mumbai: Shubman Gill, captain of Gujarat Titans, goes down memory lane to recollect the first time he had seen legend Sachin Tendulkar and Glenn Maxwell

"I remember attending three to four matches with my father at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Panchkula. In the second or third year of the IPL, Mumbai Indians came there for practice. I was around nine or ten years old at the time. I even have a photo with Sachin Sir and Glenn Maxwell. I was throwing balls to them during their practice. These are some of my earliest memories of the IPL," Gill recalled. "I was extremely nervous, but I already knew about Sachin Sir. He was the reason I started playing cricket. My father is his biggest fan. Though my dad never had much interest in posters, we had Sachin's posters in our village," he said.

"I was throwing balls to them during their practice. These are some of my earliest memories of the IPL. I was extremely nervous, but I already knew about Sachin Sir. He was the reason I started playing cricket. My father is his biggest fan. Though my dad never had much interest in posters, we had Sachin's posters in our village," Gill said in a chat with JioHotstar."I believe leadership is a continuous journey. You gain new insights with every match and every week. Different players bring different perspectives, teaching you not just about leadership but also about themselves,'

The more you play, the more experience you gain through highs and lows, and that shapes you as a leader. It is essential to have one-on-one conversations with teammates. Initially, I was not the type to naturally engage in such interactions, but as a leader, it became a conscious effort," Gill said. "As a batter, when you're on the field, you just need to focus on your batting. If you start thinking about your leadership responsibilities while batting, it can take you away from your best game. Batting is an individual battle between you and the bowler, whereas fielding is a collective effort. Leadership plays a bigger role in fielding and team strategy," he explained.

Netflix goes god-tier with one of the greatest shows in modern TV history



Netflix should be flexing its UK arm more often. It seems to be doing all the heavy-lifting, especially when it comes to long-form programming. After last year's One Day and The Gentlemen, Netflix UK has already delivered two stellar new shows this year; incidentally, the same writer is involved with both. Just a few weeks ago, the prolific Jack Thorne spearheaded Toxic Town, a crowd-pleasing drama about social injustice, told from the perspective of the women that were most affected by it. Thorne's latest is the even better Adolescence, a psychological thriller that he co-created with actor Stephen Graham. It's only March, but Adolescence, the fascinating examination of masculinity and urban alienation that it reveals itself to be, is already a contender for the best show of the year. When 13-year-old Jamie Miller is arrested for the murder of a classmate named Katie, his family — father Eddie, mother Manda, and sister Lisa - refuse to believe the allegations, even though the evidence is clearly stacked against him. In the opening scene, Jamie is yanked from his home, shoved into a waiting police van, and sent into remand. All of it unfolds in one unbroken take. In fact, the entire episode — and the three that follow — have been filmed in what the industry likes to call 'oners'. They progress in real time, meaning that Jamie's arrest and his eventual incarceration happens across an

It's an incredibly ambitious trick to perform, but director Philip Barantini has experience in this department. He

AR Murugadoss on shooting for Sikandar amid death threats against Salman Khan: 'Security was beefed up, clearing extras took 2-3 hours'



Director AR Murugadoss is returning to Bollywood after a long hiatus with Salman Khan's Sikandar. The film also stars Rashmika Mandanna in the lead role. Recently, in an interview, AR Murugadoss spoke about Sikandar and working with Salman Khan. He shared that just like Aamir Khan's Ghajini, Salman Khan's Sikandar also has a soul, he also spoke about shooting with Salman Khan amidst

Talking about Salman Khan's role in Sikandar, AR Murugadoss shared that since he is a fan-favorite superstar and brought a certain weightage to the character, he was the ideal choice. He even went on to share that the film has guite a massive scale and they would often have 10 to 20 thousand people on set. Calling his experience of working with Salman different, Murugadoss also pointed out how managing huge crowds needs high security and intense coordination. Also given that Salman was receiving death threats the shooting had become more hectic.AR Murugadoss recalled that after Salman got the death threats, security on the set was beefed up, and checking all extra artists on the sets every day would take 2-3 hours, their entry and checkups would consume major parts of the day. Due to this they would start shooting late and end by early morning. He even recalled that this took a toll on their biological clock, but eventually they adjusted to it.

Malaika Arora embraces self-love in stunning poolside post, stirs discussion on dance show incident

Mumbai: Actress Malaika Arora took to social media to share a stunning poolside photo, embracing the power of

With the caption "I like me better," the actress radiated confidence and self-empowerment. On Wednesday, Malaika shared a series of photos on her Instagram handle. In the first image, she is seen sitting and smiling by the poolside. One of the images have the text that read, "We get into our fierce 40s, fabulous 50s, sexy 60s, sassy 70s and just become more free to speak minds And it's beautiful."One blurry shot captures Arora laughing while sitting on a couch with her eyes closed, radiating pure joy. The final image showcases a plate of bread with paneer and tomatoes. Meanwhile, Malaika Arora recently made headlines after a video of her reprimanding a 16-yearold contestant for his inappropriate dance gestures, went viral. She requested the contestant's mother's contact information in response to the situation. In the latest episode of MX Player's "Hip Hop India Season 2," the young contestant's suggestive gestures toward Malaika during his performance left her visibly upset, leading to a firm reaction from the actress. After the performance, Malaika expressed her displeasure, saying,

directed the electric feature film Boiling Point, which captured a chaotic evening at a newly opened fine dining restaurant from the perspective of a tortured chef, played by Graham. The fiery performer — Graham broke out with a memorable supporting turn in Shane Meadows' This is England — reunites with Barantini as Jamie's dad in Adolescence. Even though each of its four episodes utilise the 'oner' to incredible effect — the narrative is urgent, immersive, and almost unbearably tense — they stand apart from each other in tone. The first episode covers Jamie's arrest and the devastation that it leaves his family in.

A public defender shows up at around the 30-minute mark. He explains to Jamie and his family what he should and should not say during his preliminary interrogation. The questioning is conducted by DI Bascombe (Ashley Walters) and DS Frank (Faye Marsay), who confidently corner him with the proof they've gathered. Mere hours ago, Jamie allegedly tailed Katie into a neighbourhood park, where he seemingly stabbed her seven times. He insists that he didn't do it, and his dad believes him. Jamie's guilt is played for ambiguity, and Adolescence invites viewers conditioned by mystery storytelling to begin theorising about the actual culprit. The camera doesn't cut away; it chokes you into submission. The characters can't escape their painful reality, and, Adolescence appears to be saying, and neither should you. Episode two takes place at Jamie and Katie's school, as the two detectives discover just how disorganised the public education system in the UK is. They go from classroom to classroom, desperate for any information that might shed light on Jamie's motive. It's an intricately directed episode, weaving in and out of various corners and corridors of the school; by the end of it, not only have the detectives accomplished their goal, but you've become intimately familiar with the geography. Episode two ends with a shot that defies explanation, as the characters race out of the school and into the streets. The camera leaves them behind and takes off, literally, floating over the small town and 'landing' in the parking lot where Katie died. It closes in on Eddie, staring at the crime scene with a steely expression on his face. In a matter of minutes, Barantini and his

to a quiet character moment. It's remarkable stuff.But it's the third episode, which takes place seven months later, that truly stands out as a landmark moment in modern television. Unfolding almost entirely inside one room at the juvenile detention centre that Jamie has been sent to, it might remind you of a similar episode in Netflix's recent Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story. A psychiatrist is assigned to evaluate Jamie's state of mind. Played by Erin Doherty, she admits in the opening few minutes that she is taking longer than expected to come to a conclusion about him, but because his case is so delicate, she doesn't want to make a hasty decision. The camera dances around them as they push and pull at each other, the psychiatrist gently nudging Jamie into revealing more about himself, which he does, unknowingly and rather terrifyingly. The performances in this episode — and, to be clear, in the other three as well are incredible. Owen Cooper, the young actor tasked with playing Jamie, is the find of the year. He's able to switch between innocence and insolence in a matter of seconds. This is perhaps what audiences might have felt after watching a young Edward Norton in Primal Fear.

You might expect the final episode to focus on Jamie's trial, but true to subversive form, Adolescence delivers an intimate family drama instead. Not too long ago, the actor Fran Kranz made his directorial debut with an under-seen film called Mass. Set entirely inside a plain little room, the drama in Mass took place in the aftermath of a school shooting; it featured the parents of the perpetrator having a complicated conversation with the parents of a child he killed. Mass dealt with themes such as teenage alienation, bullying, and regret. So does the final episode of Adolescence, which reveals exactly what happened on the terrible evening when Jamie followed Katie into the park. It ends with a moment that will likely go down as one of the most memorable in modern television history. Adolescence is incendiary; it's a haunting examination of parenthood and pubescent rage, emotional isolation and inherited trauma, ingrate influencers and mental illness. It's what Netflix was made

'When I'm talking, you are not talking': Hilaria Baldwin shuts down husband Alec Baldwin after he interrupts her during interview

Life away from the spotlight does not seem to suit actor Alec Baldwin. This time that spotlight was turned on by none other than his own wife, Hilaria Baldwin, who snapped at him when he interrupted her during an interview. The couple were talking to ExtraTV at the reopening of the legendary restaurant Planet Hollywood in New York. While talking about their newly released show The Baldwins, Alec seemed to cut off his wife, who was trying to answer a question. The interviewer asked Hilaria about the possibility of season 2 of the show. "I think we're gonna see, you know? We're going to see how it feels to have it be out there," Hilaria said, before Alec jumped in. While the actor was making an attempt to praise the show, his wife took no time before shutting him down, saying, "When I am talking, you are not talking. This is why we should cut him out of the show."

While the fitness influencer laughed it off, a level of tension could be felt right after her statement. Alec looked directly into the camera and made a face which felt like he was trying to diffuse the situation by putting a humorous twist to it. Alec talked about his experience of coming to the original opening of Planet Hollywood back in 1991. He shared sponded, "And that was the history channel." The interviewer



asked whether the couple were planning for a second season of their show, and Alec replied that it was going to be called the "Hilaria show," a joke which he went back to

Last time Alec Baldwin was in the news, was during his manslaughter trial. The actor was held responsible for the death of cinematographer Haylna Hutchins when he shot original opening of Planet Hollywood back in 1991. He shared anecdotes about founder Robert Earl, to which his wife re-

'Aryan Khan was not safe in jail, was surrounded by 3500 criminals', shares Ajaz Khan: 'I sent him water and cigarettes, saved him from mafia'



Ajaz Khan, known for his appearances in reality shows like Bigg Boss and several other television shows, was arrested in 2021 for his involvement in an alleged drug case. He was lodged in Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail at the same time as Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was arrested in the alleged drugs case while Shilpa Shetty's husband Raj Kundra was lodged there for making pornographic content. In a recent interview, Ajaz Khan shared in detail the kind of environment that is found in these jails and how he helped both Raj Kundra and Aryan Khan during their terms in the jail, and saved them from

Speaking to Hindi Rush, Ajaz Khan recalled helping Raj Kundra. He shared, "Raj Kundra used to send me messages every day. He was under a strict surveillance. I had been in jail for seven months when Raj Kundra came. He didn't help me, but I helped him a lot. Be it a biscuit, a bisleri bottle or a cigarette, its a big deal to provide these things in a jail. He would ask me for water, bread and biscuit. Normal water was allowed, not bisleri, but he wouldn't drink it as he would fall sick." Ajaz Khan, however, expressed his disappointment in the businessman and shared that he has forgotten all his favours. "His movie (UT69) flopped because he showed lies. He said his story, but he didn't show things that he went through and humanity is going through. Neither did he show the hero who helped him in jail. I gave him water, bread,

butter despite strict orders from superintendent of the jail. He never repaid my favours. He cut my role in his film. He never showed what all I did for him."He added, "The two months he spent with me is something he must have not even shared with his wife Shilpa Shetty. It was Corona time, there was a lot of sadness. He used to cry the whole time. I went against people to save him in jail. Yet, he never remembers me or invites me to his huge parties. He has forgotten his jail time." Similarly, Ajaz Khan shared helping Aryan Khan and said there were around 3500 criminals in that jail, and the star kid was definitely not safe in the crowd. He shared, "Shah Rukh Khan's son, Aryan Khan too was in the jail at that time. I have helped him too and have sent him water, cigarettes. This is all you can do for someone in jail. And yes, I also saved him from gundas and mafia. He was in danger, he was put in common barrack."

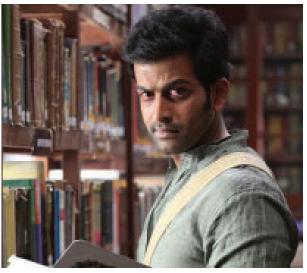
Sharad Kelkar calls voicing Ravan in 'The Legend of Hanuman' a thrilling experience

Mumbai: Actor Sharad Kelkar has shared his excitement about voicing the iconic character of Ravan in the animated series "The Legend of Hanuman."

Describing the experience as nothing short of thrilling, Sharad opened up about the challenges and satisfaction of bringing such a larger-than-life character to life through his voice. Kelkar recently revealed that Season 6 takes his character to an entirely new level. On this Hanuman Jayanti, "The Legend of Hanuman" will make its highly anticipated return with an exciting new season that promises to elevate the epic saga even further.

Speaking about voicing Ravan in the new season, Sharad Kelkar, shared, "Portraying Ravan in The Legend of Hanuman has been an incredible journey, and Season 6 takes his character to a whole new level.

When Prithviraj spoke out about tirade of abuse against him; said he was tempted to pursue film career in another language: 'What have I done to deserve all this?'



While he has largely maintained a brave front in public. Prithvirai Sukumaran has never denied that the hostility he endured was often overwhelming. Within the industry too, Prithviraj Sukumaran encountered significant opposition early in his career for refusing to blindly adhere to the norms set by the top brass. (

Although Prithviraj Sukumaran is now regarded as one of the most successful Malayalam actor-directors of all time — having also made his mark in other industries his journey in his home ground was not entirely smooth. Despite entering the industry with the advantage of being the son of yesteryear Malayalam superstar Sukumaran and renowned actor Mallika Sukumaran, Prithviraj often found himself at the receiving end of intense scrutiny and targeted criticism for his outspoken nature, which was often dubbed as arrogance. Within the industry too, he encountered significant opposition early in his career for refusing to blindly adhere to the norms set by the top brass, unlike many of his contemporaries. Nevertheless, Prithviraj stood his ground, refusing to compromise excessively, and gradually rose through the ranks to become what he is today. While he has largely maintained a brave front in public, he has never denied that the hostility he endured was often overwhelming. Following the release of his film Indian Rupee (2011) which came shortly after his private wedding to journalist Supriya Menon — the wave of abuse against him peaked on social media. Addressing this in a 2011 interview with Rediff, he shared: "I am used to it by now. But it hurts when your family is brought into it. They are not a part of this. I don't know what I have done to deserve this. If there is some incident because of which all this is happening, I can apologise or do something."

Pointing out that the war against him had begun much earlier, Prithviraj stated that a fresh wave of organised attacks, however, emerged around the time of Indian Rupee's release. "I have nothing to say to them. It is very tempting to go and pursue a film career in another language. I am an actor but also a human being. At the end of the day, I live my life, I have my family and my privacy. It wouldn't have affected me if I had actually done something wrong — at least I don't think I've done anything wrong," he asserted. The actor continued: "Eleven years in films is a long time. You start thinking that if this is what your 11 years have come to, it's not worth it." Pointing out the blockbuster success of Indian Rupee, he attested that the character assassination of him was not owing to professional reasons. Helmed by Ranjith — who had given Prithviraj his first career break with Nandanam (2002) — the Indian Rupee was co-produced by the actor and went on to win numerous accolades, including the National Film Award for Best Malayalam Feature Film.

Priyanka Chopra inspired by woman selling guavas on roadside, shares videos as she shoots for SS Rajamouli film: 'She didn't want charity'

Priyanka Chopra is constantly on the move, juggling between New York and India as she shoots for director SS Rajamouli's upcoming film with Mahesh Babu in Odisha. Recently, the Barfi actor shared a video on Instagram, recounting an encounter that left her inspired while traveling from Odisha to the Visakhapatnam airport.

In the clip, Priyanka narrates the incident, saying, "So! I don't do this often but I was very inspired today. I was driving to Vishakhapatnam airport on my way to Mumbai, on my way to New York. And I saw this woman selling guavas, and I love kaccha (unripe) guavas! So I stopped her and I asked, 'How much for all your guavas?' She said Rs 150. So I gave her a 200 note and she was trying to give me a change and I said, 'No, please keep it.'

She obviously sold guavas for a living. She went away for a little while but before the red light changed to green she came back and gave me two more guavas! A working woman, she did not want charity! Really moved me."

Priyanka also shared other photos from the set, where she is seen enjoying ice cream, spending time with her crew members, and soaking in the beautiful landscape. She captioned the post, "Lately," with a heart emoji.

While Priyanka hasn't officially announced her participation in SS Rajamouli's film, leaked behind-the-scenes photos from the set confirm she is playing a lead role. Along with Priyanka and Mahesh Babu, the film also stars Prithviraj Sukumaran in a pivotal role. Backed by KL Narayana, the film is tentatively referred to as SSMB 29 and is expected to be the most expensive Indian film ever. Priyanka also has Hollywood projects lined up, including The Bluff and Heads of State. She has also completed filming for Citadel Season 2.

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