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Betting app promotion case: Lookout notice issued against YouTuber Sunny Yadav

Suryapet: The Suryapet police have issued a lookout circular against YouTube influencer and bike rider Sunny Yadav in connection with a betting app promotion case. The case was filed on March 5 at the Nuthankal police station in Suryapet district. Sunny Yadav is currently overseas, according to Suryapet DSP Ravi. He was suspected to have crossed into Pakistan via the Wagah border, leading to the issuance of the notice. Police stated that immigration officials were instructed to arrest Yadav immediately upon his entry into India. Yadav has been accused of promoting betting apps through his social media accounts, resulting in financial losses for many individuals. Additionally, he had allegedly earned profits from these promotions.

Organise Daawat-e-Iftar in a grand manner : Bhatti



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has directed officials to arrange the Daawat-e-Iftar in a grand manner throughout Telangana State. The Deputy Chief Minister, accompanied by Minister Ponnam Prabhakar and Government Advisor Shabbir Ali, reviewed the preparations for the Iftar dinner and the Ramadan festival at the Assembly Hall on Saturday. During the discussion, he emphasised that there are sufficient funds for these annual events. Bhatti Vikramarka urged that there should be no compromise on the quality of food, protocol, or other amenities. He also requested that issues related to law and order, electricity, and drinking water be managed smoothly. Bhatti Vikramarka encouraged officials to communicate any questions or challenges they face during the preparations to either the district in-charge Minister Ponnam Prabhakar or himself without hesitation. Bhatti Vikramarka also mentioned that Shabbir Ali, the government advisor and vice-chairman of the arrangements committee, will carry out a daily assessment of the preparations. (NSS)

Govt issues orders for creation of 10,954 GPO posts in Telangana

Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has informed good news to the unemployed youth in Telangana. The State government on Saturday announced the approval of new positions for Grama Palana Officers (GPO) within the Revenue department. A total of 10,954 positions have been authorized, with appointments set to be filled by selecting from former Village Revenue Officers (VROs) and former Village Revenue Assistants (VRAs). (NSS)

Power will return to BRS again: KCR



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): BRS Party leader and Telangana's first chief minister Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhara Rao has declared that power would once again belong to the BRS party in the coming days. He made it clear that they would return to power in the State alone. Under the name 'Godavari Kanniti Gosa', former MLA Korukanti Chandra conducted a padyatra from the Godavari River to the Konda Pochamma Sagar and reached KCR's agricultural field in Erravelli on Saturday afternoon. KCR met with the padyatra team of Korukanti Chander at the agricultural field. On the occasion, KCR made key remarks. He made it clear that where there is sugar, flies would come. "Some are ready to plunder Telangana. There have been no problems in Telangana for ten years. Telangana is now caught in a web of issues. Only the BRS party will fight for Telangana at any time. We must fight for the rights of Telangana," KCR said and called for everyone to be ready like a KCR. He alleged that the Congress came to power by making promises that came to their lips. But they have not fulfilled a single promise. The credit for the rythu bandhu scheme and Kalyana Lakshmi that will be included in the manifesto belongs to the BRS party," KCR suggested and said the failures of the Congress government should be exposed. He made it clear that without an alliance in AP, Chandrababu cannot win. They forcibly united us in Andhra. No one is permanent on this land. Back then, Modi put a knife to my neck; I never took a step back for Telangana. Only the BRS will fight for Telangana at any time," he said. KCR raised the flag that Indra by alleging Gandhi deceived Telangana back then. He made it clear without an alliance in AP, Chandrababu cannot win. He said no one is permanent on this land and added that the party leaders must fight for the rights of Telangana. He recalled that there have been no problems in Telangana for ten years during BRS regime. (NSS)

Body of new born baby found near manhole in Hyd

GNS News Agency, March 22

Hyderabad: The body of a new born baby boy was found near a manhole on the road side in Hitec City on Saturday. Locals, who noticed the body, informed the police who suspect it came floating in the rain water storm.

CBI arrests Superintendent of GST Medak for bribery

Hyderabad: The Central Bureau of Investigation arrested the Superintendent of GST Medak, for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 8000 on Friday. The official, Ravi Ranjan, Superintendent of GST, Medak, had demanded a bribe of Rs 10,000 from the complainant for revoking the suspension of GSTIN of his proprietorship firm, which was suspended due to the non-filing of returns. On a complaint, the CBI registered a case and laid a trap and caught the official red handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 8,000 from the complainant on Friday at the office of Superintendent, GST, Medchal Commissionerate, Medak, Telangana. Subsequently, the official was arrested and produced before the competent court on Saturday.

South will not accept population based delimitation: CM Revanth

Chennai, March 22 (NSS): Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has emphasised that the South Indian States will reject any population-based delimitation. He stated, "If the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre carries out delimitation based on population, it will diminish the political representation of the Southern States, effectively rendering them secondary citizens while favoring the North. There is a consensus here that we cannot accept population-based delimitation because it would allow states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan to dominate the rest of the nation. We must stand firm against this at all costs." Speaking at the Fair Delimitation-First Joint Action Committee (JAC) meeting in Chennai on Saturday, the Chief Minister called on the people, political parties, and leaders of Southern India to come together to oppose the BJP's delimitation agenda. Revanth Reddy also remarked that the Southern States will reject the Pro Rata Formula, as it will negatively impact them and exacerbate the power imbalance. In 2001, the NDA government, led by Atal Behari Vajpayee, conducted delimitation in various states without increasing the number of seats. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should follow a similar approach, he said. The Chief

Minister pointed out that while the southern states contribute significantly to the national treasury, they receive comparatively smaller allocations. He accused the BJP government at the Centre of enforcing a 'demographic penalty' policy. "Since India embraced family planning as a national priority in 1971, Southern India has made considerable progress; in contrast, larger states in Northern India have not succeeded as much. Moreover, the Southern states have experienced the fastest economic growth, greater GDP, higher per capita income, job creation, superior infrastructure development, enhanced governance, and improved social welfare," stated Revanth Reddy.

He emphasised that it is time for the Centre to cease its discriminatory policies against the Southern states and Punjab. Likewise, he insisted that the Centre should acknowledge and reward the contributions made to nation-building over the past 50 years. The Chief Minister also stated that the Telangana government will soon introduce a resolution in the Assembly regarding the matter and urged all other State governments to follow suit in their own Assemblies. I will convene the next meeting of the Southern states and Punjab in Hyderabad, where we will discuss



strategies for advancing our cause. Moreover, I will arrange a public meeting for all leaders to accelerate the protest," he mentioned. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar, BRS Working president KT Rama Rao and leaders of various political parties were also present in the meeting. (NSS)

Delimitation puts Southern States' future at risk: KTR warns



Chennai, March 22 (NSS): In a powerful address at the Delimitation Conference organized by southern State leaders and Chennai Chief Minister, BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao voiced serious concerns over the potential fallout of the ongoing delimitation process in southern India. Terming it a threat to the future of southern States, KTR warned that the current policy risks undermining their economic contributions, governance achievements, and democratic representation, while accusing the Central government of perpetuating decades of discrimination against the region.

The conference, attended by prominent leaders from southern States, aimed to address the contentious issue of delimitation, which KTR argued goes beyond merely adjusting parliamentary representation. He cautioned that it could lead to the centralization of funds and fiscal control, jeopardizing the progress of southern States. "India is a democratic nation, but it is also a federal union of diverse identities and cultures. We must not forget this," KTR emphasized and urged the Central government to reconsider its approach to avoid turning democracy into authoritarian mobocracy. KTR expressed dismay at the potential consequences of delimitation, asserting that southern States, which have excelled in population control and economic development, are being unfairly penalized. "For decades, southern States have faced discrimination from the Centre. The current delimitation proposals will not only reduce our parliamentary representation, but also inflict injustice across all sectors," he added. In a bid to offer solutions, KTR presented alternative approaches on behalf of the BRS. He suggested that instead of increasing parliamentary seats based solely on population, the Centre should maintain the current number of Lok Sabha seats while increasing MLA seats in State assemblies to improve governance efficiency. Alternatively, he proposed that delimitation should factor in a State's economic progress, administrative efficiency, and developmental achievements rather than just population

metrics. "If the Centre's goal is better governance and representation, it must explore alternatives that don't sow discord between States," he urged. He highlighted that southern States contribute 36% to India's GDP despite constituting only 19% of the population, proposing a revolutionary idea that they deserve proportional representation in Parliament based on their economic output.

KTR's critique of the Centre was sharp. He argued that freezing parliamentary seats for 50 years based on population and now punishing southern States for their success in population control is grossly unjust. "Southern States do not deserve punishment; they deserve encouragement for their contributions to India's growth," he asserted. He also warned that the current delimitation policy risks creating a divide where developed States lose out while lagging regions gain disproportionately, a move he called detrimental to India's aspiration of becoming a superpower. Addressing the media persons, KTR reiterated that southern States are not opposed to aiding underdeveloped regions, but firmly reject discriminatory treatment in fund allocation and representation. "History will not forgive us if we remain silent. Future generations will question our inaction," he said, signalling a readiness to fight for the rights of southern States. He also criticized the BJP-led Central government for exacerbating regional disparities, citing examples like the allocation of bullet train projects exclusively to northern States while southern States are overlooked. The BRS leader underscored that delimitation's impact extends beyond reduced parliamentary seats, warning of a potential concentration of power that could tilt India toward authoritarianism. "If four or five States begin dictating the nation's future, it will erode the spirit of federalism," he cautioned. KTR called for a united front among southern States, drawing inspiration from Tamil Nadu's legacy of fighting for regional rights and the Dravidian movement's role in upholding federal principles. In a passionate plea, KTR concluded, "We are all Indians, but our regional identities and contributions must be respected. India can only become a superpower by 2047 if States driving progress are rewarded, not penalized." The conference marks the beginning of a broader movement, with KTR hinting at more such gatherings to challenge the Centre's delimitation policy and safeguard southern India's interests. KTR accused the BJP-led Centre of neglecting promises enshrined in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2014, such as equitable representation and development for Telangana, noting that while delimitation was implemented in Jammu and Kashmir, it has been conveniently sidelined for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to serve BJP's political interests, prompting a renewed fight to secure the State's rightful dues. (NSS)

Telangana Assembly witnesses heated debate over arrears of fee reimbursement

Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): A heated debate occurred in the Assembly between BRS, BJP and CPI MLAs and Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka regarding the outstanding fee reimbursement payments. Harish Rao, a Member of BRS, emphasized that the failure to pay these arrears has led to the closure of junior and degree colleges across Telangana. He pointed out, "Final year students are at risk of losing an academic year due to the non-issuance of their certificates. The overdue payments amount to crores of rupees. To safeguard the future of thousands of students and educational institutions, it is crucial that at least Rs 2,000 crore be disbursed by the end of this month to alleviate their difficulties." Another BRS MLA Palla Rajeswar Reddy, CPI MLA Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao and BJP MLA Palvai Hari Babu have expressed concern over delaying the payments of fee reimbursement and demanded that State government release all arrears immediately. In response, Minister Seethakka addressed the concerns raised by the Members regarding fee reimbursement. She stated that the Congress government has provided over Rs. 8,029 crore in funding to date and clarified that the state still has an outstanding obligation of Rs. 5,520.60 crore.

Seethakka noted that the previous BRS government



had left behind fee reimbursement arrears totaling Rs. 4,341 crore, which caused significant difficulties for students. She mentioned that these arrears are being disbursed gradually. Seethakka appealed to college administrations to continue issuing certificates to students. "All college management are being assured regarding the outstanding payments. Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has already discussed the issue with them," she added. The Minister explained that the allocation of funds for initiatives such as the crop loan waiver scheme is currently placing a slight strain on other departments. "I

MLC Kavitha expresses solidarity with former MLA Korukanti Chander



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): BRS party MLC K. Kavitha today expressed her solidarity with former MLA Korukanti Chander, who launched a padyatra for water. She expressed anger that the Congress and BJP parties conspired regarding the Medigadda barrage by claiming that both projects were damaged due to shoddy work of their party. She pointed out that the Congress accused the barrage of being a failure, and added that on the very next day the BJP government at the Centre sent an NDSA. She questioned as to why the NDSA officials had not come even after a month since the SLBC tunnel accident. She urged the public to notice the conspiracy behind this. She criticized the Congress leaders for sitting idle without caring for the farmers' struggles, even as lakhs of acres are drying up. She mentioned that the struggle against the Congress party in the past led to the formation of Telangana and added only through a strong fight against the Congress now would water reach the fields.

Praising the efforts of former MLA Korukanti Chander, she commented that even in the dry season, KCR had effectively utilized Godavari river water to fill up the tanks. She clarified that it was because of KCR's construction of the Kaleshwaram project that Godavari water is reaching every home in Telangana. (NSS)

Bandi calls Chennai meeting on delimitation get-together of thieves



GNS News Agency, March 22

Karimnagar: Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Saturday called the Southern States' Joint Action Council Delimitation Conference in Chennai as a meeting of 'gangs of thieves'. Speaking to reporters here on Saturday, the Union Minister alleged the Tamil Nadu government led by the DMK was involved in a Rs. 1,000 crore worth liquor scam besides other scams. With the people deciding to defeat DMK in the next assembly elections, the party was enacting a drama in the name of delimitation, he alleged. The JAC meeting held in Chennai was not an anti-delimitation meeting but one of "Chambal thieves". In order to protect money amassed in illegal ways and to escape from scams, an anti-delimitation meeting was organized, the union Minister alleged, also claiming that the number of seats in southern states would not decline due to delimitation. "Though the guidelines of delimitation have not yet been released, opposition parties are creating unnecessary ruckus," he said.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Production hiccups

The elephant has missed a golden opportunity to get the better of the dragon. An ambitious \$23-billion programme, launched four years ago to incentivise domestic manufacturing and woo firms away from China, has been allowed to lapse by the Modi government. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme will not be expanded beyond the 14 pilot sectors, while production deadlines will reportedly not be extended despite requests from some participating firms. Around 750 companies had signed up for the scheme, but many of them failed to kickstart production; those that met manufacturing targets were put off by the tardy payout of subsidies.

This disappointing development comes amid US President Donald Trump's tirade against India over tariffs. Another sobering fact is that growth in India's manufacturing sector fell to a 14-month low in February. It is apparent that the government's flagship 'Make in India' campaign, which was launched in 2014 with the objective of transforming the country into a global hub for design and manufacturing, remains a work in progress. The time is ripe to ascertain why the PLI scheme, contrary to expectations, did not prove to be a game-changer. It was rolled out at a time when China was battling to maintain production levels amid its crippling zero-Covid policy, while the US was pushing multinationals to diversify production lines. India has tasted global success in pharmaceutical and mobile phone production, but China continues to be dominant in sectors such as steel and textiles.

India is projected to become the world's third largest economy (behind the US and China) by 2028, thanks to its much-sought-after consumer market and an increasing share in the global output. There is scope for performing even better, provided New Delhi plays its cards right. China's sluggish economic growth should spur India to give its manufacturing sector a new lease of life.

Cyberabad CP conducts "Reward Mela for 2024-2025"



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): The Cyberabad Police Commissioner conducted a "Reward Mela for the year 2024-2025" on March 22, 2025 at Cyberabad CP Office main conference hall, CP office, Gachibowli with all PPs/Addl.PPs, I.Os, SHOs, Liaison Officers and CDOs of Cyberabad city.

The entire process is briefing witnesses and protecting evidences in co-ordination with Public Prosecutors was analysed. The Commissioner appreciated and rewarded (16) PPs/APPs, (35) IOs and (33) Court Duty Officers in 44 cases of seven years & above convictions. There are total 44 cases (7 Years & above) secured convictions during the period from August 15, 2024 to February 28, 2025. Commissioner Avinash Mohanty, IPS, appreciated all CDOs, I.Os, APPs and PPs for securing convictions in criminal cases and emphasized the importance of increasing the conviction rate in cases related to POCSO, Murder, Economic Offence, Robbery, Chain snatching, and Dacoity. He stated that Zonal DCPs should conduct monthly review meetings with Public Prosecutors (PPs) and Additional Public Prosecutors (Addl. PPs) to work towards improving the conviction rate. The CP stressed the need for meticulous investigations and regular follow-ups on high-impact cases.

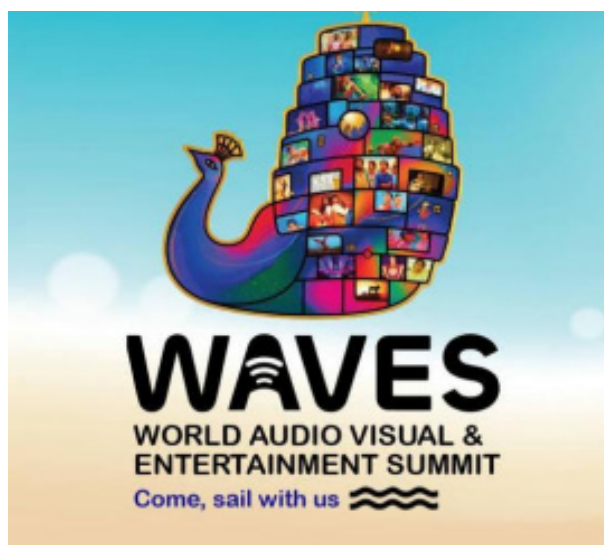
CP Mohanty presented commendations and rewards to key contributors, including PPs/Addl.PPs, APPs, I.Os, SHOs, Liaison Officers and CDOs in recognition of their outstanding efforts in increasing the conviction rate, particularly in life imprisonment cases. He further emphasized the need to secure more convictions in economic offence cases to instil confidence among citizens. "Conviction processes are complex and time-consuming. Even a small mistake can lead to errors, making it crucial to follow the process carefully. Make a strong effort, especially in life convictions. Whether it's 20 years, 10 years, or any duration, the credit is all yours. Focus on getting more convictions and strict punishments in economic offence cases to build public trust", he said.

Joint Commissioner, Traffic, Dr Gajjarao Bhupal, IPS, stated the prime object of the meeting is to increase the conviction rate and decrease acquittal rate with the coordination of Police and Prosecution Authorities. Coordinate with PP/APPs at every stage in grave cases to increase convictions, as this will have a positive impact on society, he added. Dy. Director of Prosecution, P. Manjula Devi, stated that such Reward Melas and commendations provide motivation and aim to increase the conviction rate. Recognizing the efforts of law enforcement officers not only boosts morale but also encourages them to work diligently towards ensuring justice.

The role of PP/APPs and CDOs is crucial in ensuring justice. Through strong teamwork, they work diligently to secure convictions and appropriate punishments. The participants in the programme are Commissioner of Police, Cyberabad Avinash Mohanty, IPS., Jt. CP Traffic Dr. Gajjarao Bhupal, IPS., Deputy Director of Prosecution P. Manjula Devi, Public Prosecutor D.Raghu (LB Nagar Court), PPs/APPs, L.C.Naik (DCP Crimes), Madhapur DCP Dr. G. Vineeth, IPS., Medchal DCP N. Koti Reddy, IPS., Balanagar DCP K. Suresh Kumar, IPS., Rajendranagar DCP Srinivas, IPS., Shamshabad DCP. B.Rajesh, EOW DCP Prasad, Cyberabad DCP Cyber Crimes Sri Baladevi, DCP Special Branch B.Sai Sri, Women & Child Safety DCP Srujana Karnam, Hqrts DCP Sanjeev, Addl.DCS P, ACP, SHOs, I.Os, CDOs and Liaison officers from Rachakonda and Hyderabad Police presented. (NSS)

TVAGA Launches Unreal Cinematic Challenge at WAVES 2025, Supporting PM's 'Create in India' Vision

Registration Started on March 17, 2025, Submission Deadline: April 1, 2025



Hyderabad :The Telangana VFX, Animation, and Gaming Association (TVAGA) is proud to announce the "Unreal Cinematic Challenge", set to take place at "WAVES 2025 (World Audio and Video Entertainment Summit) in Mumbai". This pioneering competition aims to push the boundaries of virtual cinematic storytelling, bringing together top talent from the VFX, animation, and gaming industries while aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Create in India" initiative. By fostering indigenous digital content creation and empowering homegrown talent, this challenge strengthens India's position as a global hub for VFX and animation.

The "Unreal Cinematic Challenge" invites both "professionals and students" to craft immersive cinematic sequences using Unreal Engine, fostering innovation and providing a platform for creators to showcase their skills. Participants will receive a "10-second base animation sequence", which they must enhance using "Unreal Engine's

Sequencer" while maintaining the provided camera animation. Contestants may introduce their own characters but must adhere to the given constraints. The final output, accompanied by an Unreal Engine viewport screenshot, will be evaluated by an esteemed panel of industry experts. The top finalists—split equally between students and professionals—will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to "WAVES 2025 in Mumbai", where they will participate in real time, build cinematic sequences live in an 8 hour challenge, and pitch their work to a jury of leading media and entertainment professionals. By providing a world-class platform for local creators, the Unreal Cinematic Challenge directly supports the "Create in India" vision by promoting Indian talent on the global stage, encouraging self-reliance in digital content creation, and fostering industry-led collaborations. It enables emerging and established professionals to gain international exposure while strengthening the country's VFX and gaming ecosystem.

Key Dates

Registration Opens: March 17, 2025

Submission Deadline: April 1, 2025

Final Presentations at WAVES 2025: May 1-4, 2025

This challenge underscores TVAGA's commitment to "empowering the VFX, animation, and gaming communities in Telangana and beyond." With a strong focus on "creativity, innovation, and industry integration, the Unreal Cinematic Challenge" is set to become a premier competition for virtual storytelling enthusiasts while championing India's growing dominance in digital entertainment. WAVES (World Audio and Video Entertainment Summit) is a premier industry event that brings together leading professionals, studios, and technology innovators from the fields of "VFX, animation, gaming, and digital content creation." As a global platform, WAVES fosters discussions, showcases cutting-edge advancements, and provides networking opportunities that help shape the future of the entertainment industry.

HATSUN AGRO PRODUCT LIMITED EXPANDS RETAIL FOOTPRINT WITH THE LAUNCH OF ITS 4000TH HAP DAILY OUTLET IN BHIMAVARAM, ANDHRA PRADESH

Hyderabad:Hatsun Agro Product Limited, India's leading private dairy company, today inaugurated its 4000th HAP daily Outlet in Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh. This milestone reflects the company's continued commitment of delivering fresh and high-quality dairy products directly to consumers. HAP daily Exclusive Stores is part of the company's retail expansion strategy, offering a range of brands including Arun Icecreams, Aroky, Hatsun, and Hanobar. These stores will retail ice creams, fresh milk, curd, buttermilk, paneer, yoghurt, juices, chocolates, butter, and more. Apart of direct consumer sale, HAP daily Outlets will cater to the retail outlets in their vicinity and increasing availability of the products and expanding the brand reach. Speaking on the occasion to mark the 4000th HAP daily Outlet, Mr. R.G. Chandramogan, Chairman, Hatsun Agro Product Ltd., said, "The opening of our 4000th HAP daily Exclusive Store in Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh is an important milestone in the company's journey to bring fresh, high-quality dairy products closer to the consumers. Hatsun Agro's focus has always been on innovation, quality, and ensuring accessibility while creating newer opportunities for dairy farmers and franchisee partners. We aim to continue expanding our footprint, strengthening our distribution network, and enhancing customer experience through such modern retail formats."

To further enhance its market reach, Hatsun Agro has recently made strategic acquisitions to expand processing capacities to meet the growing demand for dairy and ice cream products, strengthen distribution networks in key markets, and increase its product portfolio with novel value-



added dairy offerings.

Arun Icecreams, a leading flagship brand under Hatsun Agro, is distributed from HAP daily across India and exported to 6 countries (Singapore, Seychelles, Maldives, Brunei, UAE Ajman, & Mauritius) further strengthening its global footprint. Hatsun Agro continues to expand its retail presence across existing and new markets, with upcoming outlets planned in Maharashtra, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Andaman Nicobar Islands, while further deepening its presence in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, and Goa. With this milestone, Hatsun Agro is reinforcing its vision of transforming India's dairy retail landscape, making fresh dairy products easily accessible while supporting the livelihoods of dairy farmers and entrepreneurs.

UK & Ireland Edu Fair 2025 Kicked off



Hyderabad: Yathapu Consulting Pvt Ltd, known as i20fever, successfully hosted the UK & Ireland Edu Fair 2025 on 22nd March, 2025 at Hotel Taj Deccan, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, attracting over 400 eager students. This prestigious event brought together representatives from more than 20 renowned universities across the UK and Ireland, providing invaluable insights into courses, career opportunities, internships, and other essential resources available to international students. Mr. Naveen Yathapu, Founder of i20fever, stated, "At i20fever, our mission is to connect the right students to great universities. Today's Edu Fair is a testament to our unwavering commitment to empower students to achieve their dreams of higher education abroad. We are proud to serve as a bridge between aspiring students and world-class educational institutions." Established in 2004, i20fever has built a strong reputation as the most trusted overseas education agency in Hyderabad. Over the past 19 years, the organization has guided thousands of students in the Telugu states, transforming lives and positively impacting families through personalized, transparent guidance and a focus on individual student success. The UK & Ireland Edu Fair 2025 featured prominent participating institutions, including De Montfort University, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Chester, and Dublin City University. Attendees had the chance to meet directly with university representatives, engage in one-on-one spot assessments, and inquire about scholarship opportunities. The event also included free training sessions for English proficiency tests, such as IELTS, DET, PTE, and TOEFL, further supporting students on their educational journeys. "Our

vision goes beyond numbers; we aim to positively impact the lives of families as well. At i20fever, we strive to create a transparent process that generates value for students and partner institutions alike," added Naveen Yathapu.

i20fever organises UK & Ireland Edu Fair 2025 in Hyd

GNS News Agency, March 22

Hyderabad: i20fever organised the UK & Ireland Edu Fair 2025 here on Saturday, attracting over 400 students.

The event brought together representatives from more than 20 universities across the UK and Ireland, providing insights into courses, career opportunities, internships, and other essential resources available to international students.

The fair featured institutions, including De Montfort University, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Chester, and Dublin City University. Attendees had the chance to meet directly with university representatives, engage in one-on-one spot assessments, and inquire about scholarship opportunities. The event also included free training sessions for English proficiency tests, such as IELTS, DET, PTE, and TOEFL, further supporting students on their educational journeys. i20fever founder Naveen Yathapu said the event served as a bridge between aspiring students and world-class educational institutions.

Addl DCP, a X class student killed in road accidents



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): A road accident occurred near Lakshmareddipalem in Hayathnagar area here on Saturday morning. In the accident, Additional DCP Bobby lost his life. Bobby, who was residing in Maitri Kuteer in Lakshmareddipalem, had gone out for a morning walk. While crossing the Vijayawada national highway, he was hit by an RTC bus. The DCP died on the spot. The police have registered a case and initiated investigation into the incident.

X class student loses life at Gachibowli

Meanwhile, a tenth-class student lost her life in a road accident on the Gachibowli flyover in the city. It is learnt that a young man from TNGO Colony took his sister to the examination centre in Gachibowli to write her X class exam. After the exam, on their way back, as they reached the Gachibowli flyover, their two-wheeler lost control and fell under an RTC double-decker bus. Consequently, the student lost her life at the scene while her brother sustained injuries. Upon receiving the information, Rayadurgam police rushed to the spot and collected details. The injured young man was rushed to a local hospital. The Rayadurgam police registered a case and took up investigation. (NSS)

BRS party seeks privilege notice against minister Komatireddy



Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has been issued a notice for violation of assembly privileges by the Opposition BRS party. Former minister Harish Rao and other BRS party MLAs submitted a privilege notice against Komatireddy to assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar.

In their notice, they requested the Speaker to take action against Komatireddy Venkat Reddy as he made false statements regarding road development in the assembly. They informed the Speaker that the response given by Komatireddy regarding questions related to the Roads & Buildings Department during the legislative assembly question hour was misleading.

They claimed that no CRS funds had been released under the BRS government and added that funds had not been allocated for the roads in the Nalgonda constituency while noting that no escrow account had been opened for the Uppal elevated corridor. They presented evidence to the Speaker in this regard and requested immediate approval for the notice of violation of assembly privileges against Komatireddy. It is noteworthy that Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy provided several details about the road construction in the State in the assembly. He also responded to questions posed by former minister Harish Rao in the assembly. The BRS has been expressing objections to the response given by Komatireddy Venkat Reddy. (NSS)

Letters from Telangana legislators for Srivari darshan valid from March 24

No VIP break darshans on March 25 & 30

Tirumala, March 22 (NSS): As per the instructions of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, the letters of recommendation from the public representatives of Telangana State will come into effect from Monday, March 24 onwards. As such, the recommendation letters will be received on Sunday, March 23. As already announced by TTD earlier, there will be no VIP break darshans on March 25 and 30 in view of Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam and Sri Vishwasu Nama Samvatsara Telugu Ugadi Asthanam on the respective dates. For this reason, it is once again informed for the clarity of the devotees that no letters of recommendation will be accepted on March 24 for VIP break darshan on March 25 and also on March 29 for Darshan on March 30. Similarly, TTD also made it clear in the past that the letters of recommendation received from Andhra public representatives on Sunday for VIP break darshan on Monday will be received on Saturday for VIP Break Darshan on Sunday. (NSS)

Complaints against influencer, YouTuber for promoting betting apps

GNS News Agency, March 22

Hyderabad: Two complaints were lodged against social media influencers for allegedly promoting betting apps in Neredmet and Osmania University police stations on Saturday.

As per available information, a complaint was lodged against 'Jabardast' Varsha in Neredmet police station alleging she was promoting illegal betting apps through her social media accounts. At Osmania University police station, members of the Janasena student wing lodged a complaint against Harsha Sai, a YouTuber.

Pushkar Singh Dhami cites UCC, anti-conversion laws as key achievements in his 'report card' on 3 years



GNS News Agency, March 22

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Saturday (March 22, 2025) marked three years in office, highlighting the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), strict anti-conversion laws, and a crackdown on illegal mazzas and madrasas as key achievements. Giving a "report card" on the state government's performance, Mr. Dhami said demographic change was a significant challenge his government faced and affirmed that it will continue to take actions like removing encroachments and verification drive to address the issue. Mr. Dhami said his government has tackled issues that were put on the back burner by previous governments. "Illegal mazzas, constructions, and madrasas across the state were a big problem. We are conducting a drive against them, and action will continue until Uttarakhand is entirely encroachment-free. We won't hesitate to act against anything illegal," he said at a press conference on the eve of completing three years of his second tenure as Uttarakhand Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister asserted that his government had taken strict action against "love jihad, land jihad, or spit jihad" but did not associate them with any particular community. Mr. Dhami said his government was preparing for challenges the state might face over the next decade and had asked all departments to propose three to five schemes that could be transformative. Traffic management, he said, could become a significant issue after the Delhi-Dehradun expressway is operational, reducing travel time to 2.5 hours. A ring road linked to the expressway is being planned in consultation with the Centre to manage congestion, he added.

Mr. Dhami, who took oath as the Chief Minister of the

State for the second time in a row on March 23, 2022, said some of the worst disasters hit the state during his tenure and every time he lost no time in reaching ground zero and being in the midst of the affected people. He gave the examples of the Silkyara tunnel collapse in 2023 in which all 41 trapped labourers were rescued alive after an enormous multi-agency rescue operation that lasted 17 days, the Kedhar Valley disaster last year in which lakhs of people were evacuated to safety and the recent avalanche at a BRO camp in Mana village in which the lives of 46 out of a total of 54 workers were saved. Mr. Dhami said he has asked the main departments to come up with "game-changer" schemes to deal with the challenges and realise the state's growth potential over the next ten years. He said the women of Uttarakhand will play a major role in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India.

Products manufactured by the women of Uttarakhand villages and their impressive packaging under the House of Himalayas brand are being recognised across the country and abroad, Dhami said. Women of Uttarakhand have been given 30 per cent reservation in government jobs in the state, he said describing it as a major step towards their empowerment. He said investment MoUs worth Rs 3.55 lakh crore were signed at the global investors summit held in Dehradun in 2023 out of which work on the implementation of MoUs worth Rs 80 thousand crore had begun already. Describing investment as a thrust area, he said it would generate employment.

Mr. Dhami said his government introduced the country's strictest anti-copying law to prevent paper-leak of recruitment examinations. More than 100 people involved in facilitating the use of unfair means at recruitment examinations were put behind bars. "It has created confidence among job aspirants who prepare hard for their examinations in the fairness of the recruitment process, Mr. Dhami said. The Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his constant guidance and support in managing the affairs of the state. He said the clearance given recently by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs headed by the prime minister to two major ropeway projects from Sonprayag to Kedarnath and Govindghat to Hemkund Sahib will make the yatra for pilgrims especially the old and the elderly extremely convenient. He also mentioned the expansion of heli services to major tourist destinations and the launch of long-pending projects, including the Lakhwar multipurpose hydroelectric project and the Song Dam drinking water project.

Bobbili Fort in Vizianagaram: Where memories of an iconic battle stay alive

GNS News Agency, March 22

The year 1757 marks a pivotal moment in India's history. Through the Battle of Plassey, fought between East India Company forces led by Robert Clive and Nawab of Bengal Siraj-Ud-Daulah backed by the French on January 23 that year, the British established a firm foothold in the subcontinent. Lost in the vastness of history, however, is another conflict, one marked by bloodshed, intrigue and revenge and fought just a day after the Battle of Plassey.

The Bobbili kingdom was established by King Pedarayudu 350 years ago. Pedarayudu, who hailed from Venkatagiri in Nellore, helped the Mughals when they attacked the kingdom of Kalinga in 1652. Mughal military commander Sher Mohammed Khan, who controlled Chicacole (Srikakulam) then, gifted Rajam area to Pedarayudu, who, in turn, established a kingdom in the name Bobbili. Currently, Rajam and Bobbili are 40 km apart. The Rajas of Bobbili remained defiant of the French for decades, and Raja Gopala Krishna Ranga Rao (1710-1757) was no different. The French at the time were in friendly ties with Vizianagaram King Pusapati Peda Vijayarama Raju. A view of the Durbar Mahal at the Bobbili Fort in Vizianagaram district. The museum is about 90 kms from Visakhapatnam.

With the support of French military leader Marquis de Bussy, Vijayarama Raju attacked Bobbili and killed Ranga Rao in the Battle of Bobbili on January 24, 1757. On learning about the king's death and the destruction of the city, Tandra Paparayudu, Ranga Rao's brother-in-law and a fierce warrior, tracked down and killed Vijayarama Raju a couple of days after the war. Both Bobbili and Vizianagaram lost their kings in the war, which caused indescribable sufferings to the people of both the kingdoms. The kings who came to power later soon realised that there were mere



pawns in the games of Europeans powers. A museum inside the Bobbili Fort, around 50 km from Vizianagaram city, keeps memories of the battle alive. Weapons used in the war, including straight swords, cross swords, daggers, spears, bows, arrows, slings, javelins, carbines, flamethrower, sabres, halberd, harrow, mace, hammer, axe, hook, sickle and rake crutch, are on display. Stern portraits of the many kings who ruled Bobbili for 300 years, adorn the walls. Visitors can also see the swords and other weapons used by Papparayudu. "The museum occupies the entire first floor of the fort. We took the support of experts from Salar Jung museum in Hyderabad for maintenance. People from across the country visit here. Their feedback is helping us improve the facilities," said Bobbili TDP MLA R.V.S.K.V.V. Ranga Rao (Baby Nayana) while speaking to The Hindu. According to him, there is a rush of visitors, particularly during festivals and on Sundays. The entire fort is also decorated on auspicious occasions like Dasara and Deepavali. The museum is maintained by the family of the Bobbili Rajas.

Let's work together for city's development: GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi

Hyderabad, March 22 (NSS): The city mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi today urged the standing committee members to work together for the city's development by making public-oriented decisions. The GHMC standing committee meeting was held on Saturday evening under the chairpersonship of Mayor Vijayalakshmi. On this occasion, the newly elected standing committee members were congratulated by Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi and Commissioner Ilamburthi, who honored all the members with shawls. Following this, an introduction program for the officials and standing committee members took place. During this meeting, Mayor Vijayalakshmi emphasized the importance of the standing committee. She stated that the standing committee was a policy decision-making body and encouraged members to work together to make constructive, public-oriented decisions for the city's development. She suggested conducting committee meetings in a healthy environment by discussing all issues comprehensively and striving for solutions to problems. She explained the rules of the standing committee to the members. "The state government is allocating significant funds to GHMC in a way that has never happened before. The government is committed to develop Hyderabad as a global city. On behalf of GHMC, I am expressing gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy," the mayor said. In this meeting, standing committee members Bontu Shridevi, Banothu Sujata, Syed Minhajuddin, Sameena Begum, Abdul Waheb, Mahalaxmi Ramana Goud, Mohammed Gouseuddin, C.N. Reddy, V. Jagadeeshwar Goud, and Burugadda Pushpa Nagesh participated. GHMC Additional commissioners Shivakumar Naidu, Venugopal Reddy, Satyanarayana, Venugopal, Pankaj, Geeta Radhika, Raghu Prasad, Chandrakant Reddy, Yadagiri Rao, Subhadra Devi, zonal commissioners Hemant Keshav Patil, Anurag Jayanti, Aporuv Chauhan, Uppender Reddy, Venkanna, CC Srinivas, C.E. Ratnakar, Chief Engineer Koteswar Rao, Chief Examiner Venkateshwar Reddy, Estate Officer Uma Prakash and others also participated in the meeting. The committee ap-



proved to hold standing committee meetings every Thursday at 3 PM, as the election of standing committee members has been completed. The committee approved the issuance of an N.O.C. by the corporation to allocate 0.11 acres of land in Alwal village for the construction of a new fire station to the fire department officer of Medchal-Malkajgiri district. The details of the income and expenditure of GHMC for the month of January were submitted to the committee for information. The committee approved to recommend to the government to waive 90% of the outstanding interest under a one-time scheme for the financial year 2024-25 by seeking permission with the approval of the standing committee. The committee approved the restoration and preservation of the Kumandan Bauli Heritage Structure in the Gudimalkapur flower market with financial assistance from the Indian School of Hyderabad with an estimated cost of Rs. 1.50 crores to be carried out in the first phase for 18 months in collaboration with the construction NGO. The committee approved the administrative permission for the construction of stormwater drains from Progress School in Chandrayangutta Bandlaguda to Crystal Town Delivery Courier Service, with an estimated cost of Rs. 2.95 crores. The committee approved the administrative sanction to call for tenders for the diversion of sewage at Nallaganadla Cheruvu in Lingampally village of Sheralingampally mandal, with an estimated cost of Rs. 3.35 crores. (NSS)

Glaciers — no frozen relics but the pulse of earth's water system



GNS News Agency, March 22

An old man stands by the river, staring at the water that has nurtured his village for generations. He remembers when the stream was full, a roaring silver ribbon cutting through the valley. It was more than water; it was life, sustaining his ancestors, their crops, their livestock. But now, the river is thinner, quieter — almost as if, too, knows that time is running out. This is not just his story. It is the story of millions, from the Himalayas to the Andes, the Alps to the Rockies. It is the story of our world's glaciers, melting faster than ever, sending a warning we can no longer ignore. In 2023, glaciers experienced their greatest water loss in over 50 years, marking the second consecutive year in which all glaciated regions worldwide reported ice loss. Switzerland, for instance, lost 10% of its total glacier mass between 2022 and 2023, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that glaciers have been losing approximately 273 billion tonnes of ice annually since 2000. Their disappearance is accelerating sea-level rise, disrupting weather patterns, and threatening water supplies for over two billion people. 2025 as international year

Recognising the urgency of this crisis, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation and proclaimed March 21 of each year as the World Day for Glaciers, starting in 2025. During the year, global action will be mobilised through high-level political engagement, international scientific collaboration, and education campaigns. UNESCO will play a key role in this effort, contributing both through scientific research and advocacy.

During the launch event in Geneva, Dr. Lidia Brito, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, explained that the "50 UNESCO heritage sites with glaciers represent almost 10 percent of Earth's glacier area". However, a UNESCO study in 2022, 'World Heritage Glaciers: Sentinels of Climate Change', warns that glaciers in one-third of these sites could disappear by 2050, underscoring the need for urgent global action. For centuries, glaciers have acted as natural reservoirs, storing freshwater and gradually releasing it to sustain rivers that quench thirst, irrigate fields, and power hydroelectric plants. In regions such as the Himalayas, the Andes, and the Alps, glacier-fed rivers such as the Ganges, the Yangtze, and the Amazon form the backbone of economies and ecosystems. However, rising temperatures are disrupting this balance. Water flows from mountains are becoming erratic.

Initially, increased glacial melt may seem beneficial

Tamil Nadu was created by the British, not Tamilians: Maharashtra Governor Radhakrishnan

GNS News Agency, March 22

Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan on Saturday (March 22, 2025) claimed that 'secessionist forces' remain active in Tamil Nadu and Punjab, albeit in different ways, and said the thoughts of unity and integration propounded by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founder Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar are more relevant today than ever. The Governor recalled his association with RSS and highlighted the work done by RSS in Tamil Nadu, especially in Tirupur. Speaking at the launch of 'Hedgewar - A Definitive Biography', a book authored by British-Indian writer Sachin Nandha, at Raj Bhavan in Mumbai, Mr. Radhakrishnan highlighted concerns about divisive narratives and stressed the importance of national unity. He said the thoughts of unity and integration propounded by RSS founder Dr K B Hedgewar are more relevant today than ever.

"In Punjab, it is slightly different, but in Tamil Nadu, there are no weapons — their words act as weapons that could mislead youngsters," he said. He criticised narratives suggesting that India was created by the British, arguing that India had been functionally and traditionally united long before colonial rule. "They don't know the history that even Ashoka the Great had conquered up to Tamil Nadu. My arguments are based on the ground reality that India might have been created politically by the British, but functionally and traditionally, we were one much before the colonial rule." The Governor reflected on Tamil Nadu's historical divisions, noting that the region was once split into Chera, Chola, Pandya, and Kongunadu

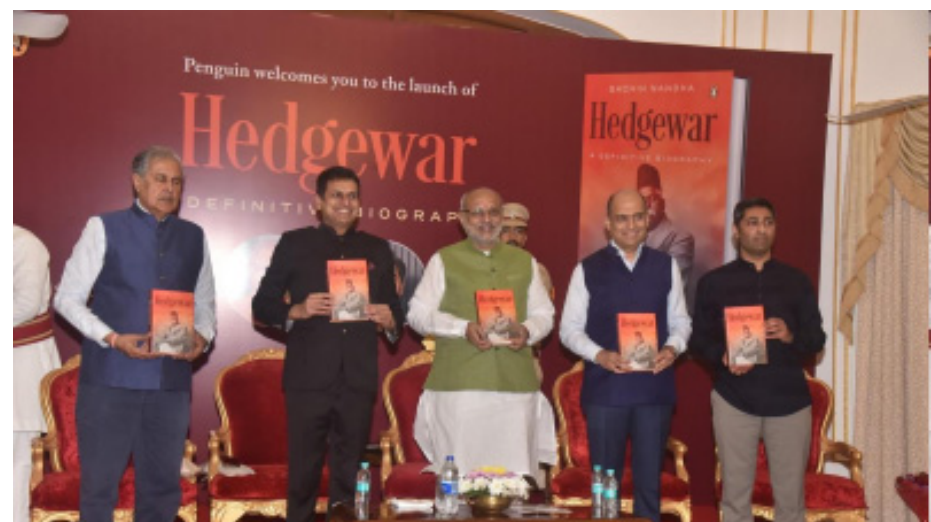
kingdoms. "When Jainism was born, two-thirds of Tamils followed it. Today, only 40,000 Tamil Jains remain — but that is a different story. When Jainism spread, it spread on its own. Buddhism was also widely followed in Tamil Nadu. I tell them that Tamil Nadu was politically created by the British. No Tamilian created a single Tamil Nadu. Historically, Tamil Nadu was divided into Chera, Chola, Pandya, and even Kongunadu — they were separate kingdoms. If we keep dividing it further, it would be like boarding a town bus where you need to show your passport to get on and get off. That is the ground reality." He warned that such division could weaken India's ability to assert itself internationally. "How many divisions can we make? Even in Maharashtra, Vidarbha is different, Konkan is different, and Marathwada is different. If we keep dividing like this, who will have the bargaining power to make demands? It is because we stand united as India that we can assert our interests on the international stage. If we were a small country like many in Europe, we would not have the same bargaining power," he said. Mr. Radhakrishnan said that he

— more water in rivers, more supply for cities and farms. But this is a dangerous illusion. Once glaciers reach a tipping point, they can no longer replenish themselves, leading to severe water shortages. UNESCO's World Water Development Report 2025 highlights that 25 countries, home to a quarter of the world's population, already face extremely high-water stress annually, a number set to rise as glaciers disappear. Cities such as Lima, La Paz, and Kathmandu, which depend on glacier-fed sources, are already experiencing worsening droughts and declining hydropower generation.

Beyond water shortages, glacier melt is triggering another disaster — Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs). As glaciers retreat, they leave behind massive lakes, precariously held back by loose, unstable rocks. These natural barriers are fragile, and when they collapse, they unleash sudden, devastating floods. In October 2023, a GLOF from the South Lhonak Lake in Sikkim sent torrents of water crashing into the Teesta river, destroying infrastructure and killing dozens. A 2016 glacial lake burst in Tibet caused widespread damage in Nepal's Bhotokoshi River basin. Countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Peru are on the frontlines of this growing threat. Glaciers are more than just frozen water — they are also essential to biodiversity. Many UNESCO-designated biosphere reserves depend on glacial meltwater to sustain fragile ecosystems. In the Hindu Kush Himalayas, glacial retreat threatens unique plant and animal species, disrupts river flows, and puts immense pressure on mountain biodiversity, destabilising ecological balance. As glaciers retreat, the need to integrate local knowledge with scientific approaches becomes even more urgent.

On climate literacy Climate change is a pressing topic of discussion across all quarters — at policy tables, in classrooms, and in everyday conversations — as awareness continues to grow. But understanding the science behind it remains crucial. A 2021 UNESCO study, 'Youth Demands for Quality Climate Change Education', revealed a significant gap in young people's understanding, with 70% of youth worldwide unable to explain climate change in detail. To address this, UNESCO, in partnership with other UN agencies, launched the Climate Science Literacy exhibition in 2022, designed to advance climate literacy by presenting complex issues in an engaging and accessible way.

The declaration of the World Day for Glaciers is a global call to action. Glaciers are not distant, frozen relics. They are the pulse of our planet's water system. Protecting them is protecting our future. Governments must strengthen policies to curb emissions, invest in climate adaptation and implement strategic initiatives for glacier protection and sustainable water management. Individuals, too, play a role — by reducing carbon footprints, advocating for climate action and supporting sustainable water management practices. As the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, has emphasised, ongoing crises threaten the well-being of millions of people. To counter these threats, we must embrace a new paradigm of environmental stewardship, one that aligns with UNESCO's vision to "reconcile with nature". On this World Day for Glaciers, let us listen to what glaciers are telling us. Their fate — and ours — is inextricably linked. Water is life, and glaciers are its reservoirs. Their protection is our shared responsibility.



joined the RSS in 1973 when the late Suryanarayana Rao was the pracharak, and highlighted the influence of the RSS founder Dr. Hedgewar, recalling how he started the organisation with schoolboys. "People questioned whether these small boys could build a Hindu Rashtra, but he never worried. Today, RSS is one of the largest national corps, producing people who live for society and the country," he said.

He further quoted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attributing Mr. Modi's approach to the influence of RSS. "Our Prime Minister says it is because of RSS that he lives for others. That is the greatest thought and enthusiasm Doctorji (Hedgewar) injected in young minds," he said. The Governor praised the legacy of Dr. Hedgewar and said, "Doctor ji used to always say, 'You must be proud of your culture, you must be proud of your motherland.' There is no question that we love our mother, but when it comes to the motherland, nothing is more important," he said. He said that the book had been released at the right time. "When India is on the rise and flourishing, the legacy of this great man and the early RSS will con-

India towards equality, peace and prosperity."

The book's release coincides with the 100th anniversary of the RSS. "Dr. Hedgewar becomes increasingly relevant for modern India as the RSS continues to grow past its 100 year anniversary. To understand modern India, we have to understand Hedgewar's creation - the RSS. There is no better place to start than to understand the mind of Hedgewar," says Mr. Nandha, who is also the Director-General of the International Centre for Sustainability. The book is set against the backdrop of a country grappling with colonial rule, rising communal tensions, and the complexities of modernity, he said. "It offers insight into Hedgewar's philosophy of cultural nationalism, his challenges with contemporaries like Gandhi, Nehru and Savarkar, and his transformative leadership. It also looks at his struggles in understanding and addressing issues within Hindu society. More than a biography, I approached it as a deep exploration of India's civilisational ethos, trying to offer a nuanced perspective on the RSS's origins and its influence on India today," said Mr. Nandha. In the book...

Farm union leaders announce protests over Punjab Govt action: 'it's not badlav but badle di bhavana'

GNS News Agency, March 22

The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) announced a protest outside the offices of deputy commissioners in Punjab and Haryana Thursday, a day after the Punjab Police cleared the Shambhu and Khanauri border sites where farmers have been protesting, and detained two senior farm leaders. Meanwhile, farmers who were detained Wednesday started a hunger strike in different police stations of Sangrur, Patiala, and Mohali.

The latest protest was announced by Satnam Singh Pannu, president of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangrassh Committee, a constituent of KMM, early morning. Pannu said, "We chose Bhagwant Mann as he had promised badlav ki sarkar but whatever he did on Wednesday was badle di bhavana. While meeting with farmers was going on at Chandigarh, they had started making arrangements to lift the dharnas from Shambhu and Khanauri." "He did this to show loyalty with the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). First, you and the BJP didn't allow farmers to enter Delhi and Chandigarh, and now we will not allow you and your party workers to enter Punjab villages."

Sawinder Singh Sabhrahan, state general secretary of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangrassh Committee, said, "We didn't block the highway but the Haryana Government never allowed us to move towards Delhi. They had built the walls."



Once again the pro-corporate face of the AAP has been projected. We will give blessings to our arrested leaders today, and you can keep them in jail for whatever period you want. We will continue our struggle for our demands". On Thursday morning, the police continued to clear the protest sites at Shambu and Khanauri along the highways spread over a few kilometres. Meanwhile, the Haryana Government pasted notices outside the houses of several farmer union leaders in the state, asking them to join the investigation regarding the pending FIRs against them, and arrested 10 to 12 farm leaders.

Tejveer Singh, spokesperson of BKU Shaheed Bhagat Singh, said, "A notice was pasted outside my house in the Panjokhra village in Ambala on Thursday morning. I am not at home. My family members are being told to send me to the police station for investigation regarding pending 3 FIRs." "I think Wednesday's action was taken by the Punjab Government at the behest of the BJP and RSS. Bhagwant Mann has spoken the language of the BJP and RSS once again. In yesterday's meeting, Sarwan Singh Pandher, co-ordinator of KMM, asked Punjab Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak about the movement of the police at the borders but he said it was a routine exercise. Later, they arrested them and demolished structures at Shambhu and Khanauri. They also detained hundreds of farmers. It was backstabbing and nothing else. Sab yaad rakha jayega (We be keep everything in mind)," Singh added. In a statement Wednesday, the SKM strongly condemned the Punjab Government's move to arrest several SKM (NP) and KMM leaders, including Jagjeet Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher, soon after they entered the state after finishing their talks with the Centre in Chandigarh. "The AAP Government in Punjab has shown that it is committed to enforcing corporate and MNC frameworks in agriculture, and it is for this that it is collaborating and cooperating with the RSS and the BJP at the Centre. It is rather sinister that this move has come after top leaders met industrialists on Tuesday," said the statement.

Why Kejriwal's name on foundation stones: Mohali deputy mayor slams Punjab CM



Terming the move "undemocratic and unconstitutional," the deputy mayor said, "It is a calculated attempt to please Kejriwal to safeguard Mann's political career."

GNS News Agency, March 22

Mohali Deputy Mayor Kuljith Singh Bedi alleged that the name of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal appeared on foundation stones of government projects across Punjab and accused Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann of "violating constitutional norms" by including former Delhi chief minister's name on official plaques despite the latter holding no position in the state government. "Mann used to mock leaders for putting their names on foundation stones, saying only those who physically contributed to construction deserved such recognition. Did Kejriwal mix cement and mortar for these projects? Why is his name there?" Bedi questioned.

Terming the move "undemocratic and unconstitutional," the deputy mayor said, "It is a calculated attempt to please Kejriwal to safeguard Mann's political career." Bedi alleged, "Kejriwal of trying to control the Punjab government to shield himself from legal troubles in Delhi. He is a defeated leader in Delhi but wants to act as the 'Super CM' of Punjab by wielding complete control over the government." Calling the move an insult to Punjab's democratic values, Bedi warned that the people would not tolerate such political favouritism. "The AAP is trying to impose Kejriwal's name in Punjab after losing credibility in Delhi, but the people of Punjab will give them a befitting reply," he asserted.

How a Pune painter is asking viewers to re-imagine women in different contexts



GNS News Agency, March 19

Pune artist Arpa Mukhopadhyay's art, which blends myth and modernity, is drawn from the dual cultural influences she experienced while growing up – she was born in a small village in West Bengal, with winding streets and strong folk customs, before moving to the "maximum city" of Mumbai. Mukhopadhyay's art, which blends myth and modernity, is drawn from the dual cultural influences she experienced while growing up – she was born in a small village in West Bengal, with winding streets and strong folk customs, before moving to the "maximum city" of Mumbai.

One of the paintings by Pune-based contemporary artist Arpa Mukhopadhyay has three women dressed in traditional saris, with their heads covered, playing on tablas, tanpura, and flute. What is left to the viewer's imagination is where the women are located as the blue background gives no clue and makes the musicians appear to be floating in the air. "It is as if they are in eternity. They don't need to belong to a place or time, Music is eternal and they represent music," says Mukhopadhyay, who will display the work at her first solo show, Timeless Reimaginings, at PN Gadgil in Pune's Aundh from March 19-26. Mukhopadhyay's art, which blends myth and modernity, is drawn from the dual cultural influences she experienced while growing up – she was born in a small village in West Bengal, with winding streets and strong folk customs, before moving to the "maximum city" of Mumbai. When she began to paint and develop her aesthetics, Mukhopadhyay found that her art was emerging from "traditional Indian aesthetics, inspired by folk art, such as the Kalighat paintings and the Bengal School of Art paintings that I encountered during my stay in

Mumbai Coastal Road: 7.5-km promenade, vehicular underpass, 20 pedestrian underpasses set to be opened

GNS News Agency, March 19

Two new features of the Mumbai Coastal Road, a 7.5-km-long promenade and a vehicular underpass, are set to open for the public ahead of this year's monsoon, according to civic officials. At present, the 10.58-km high-speed corridor is catering to vehicles travelling between Marine Drive and Bandra Worli Sea Link (BWSL). Civic officials maintained that landscaping works are in the final stages and will be completed in the next two months.

The Rs 13,000-crore coastal road project has been realised by reclaiming 111 hectares of the Arabian Sea, of which 70 hectares are being earmarked for creating open spaces and promenades for the public. "The promenade will extend between Priyadarshini Park (PDP) and Worli. It will comprise jogging tracks and seating areas along with multiple patches of green cover. The landscaping work is underway, and we aim to complete it by the end of May," said a civic official. The promenade will run parallel to the shoreline alongside the southbound carriageway of the coastal road. It will be 20 metres wide and designed with tactile tiles to accommodate people with disabilities, as per the official. A concept from Hong Kong inspires the entire promenade, which will feature palm trees and indigenous shrubs. The saplings of these trees and shrubs have been relocated from nurseries in various parts of the country, including Delhi, Gujarat, Pune, and Kolkata.

"Once the promenade is open, people can view the Arabian Sea more closely. There will be 20 pedestrian underpasses (PuP) that will provide access to the promenade from the landside. The work on the PuPs is also in the final stages, and they will be opened once the landscaping works are completed," the official said. In addition to the promenade, 11-meter-wide traffic medians are being transformed into green spaces, according to the official. Next month, a 550-metre-long vehicular underpass (VuP) will be opened

Patiala SSP suspends 12 police personnel for assaulting serving Army officer, his son

GNS News Agency, March 19

The Patiala senior superintendent of police (SSP) Monday suspended 12 police personnel between the ranks of inspector and constable for assaulting a serving Army officer and his son on the intervening night of March 13 and 14. There had been widespread uproar among serving and retired defence fraternity after CCTV footage of the thrashing meted out to the Army officer and his son went viral on social media. Initially, the Patiala police appeared to be protecting its personnel as the FIR was registered against unknown persons even though the complainant had named three inspectors posted.

Addressing the media in Patiala on Monday, SSP Dr Nanak Singh said a departmental inquiry was ordered against all suspended officers and the probe would be completed within 45 days. "We apologise for the incident involving the Army officer and extend our full respect to him. We have the highest respect for Army personnel," said SSP. He added that at the time of the incident, neither the Colonel nor the police personnel were in uniform. Meanwhile, the headquarters of the Western Command and that of the 1 Armoured Division in Patiala are learnt to have taken up the issue of the attack on the Colonel with the Punjab government and police. A statement issued by the Western Command HQs said, "There was an altercation and scuffle between an Army officer on leave in Patiala and policemen post midnight March 13- 14. Issue is being handled with due alacrity both at state government and Local level by the Command HQs and lower formations. FIR has been lodged. Strict action against errant policemen assured by Police authorities soonest along with a time-bound inquiry." "The officer was shifted to Military Hospital (MH) and all possible help is being extended. Local civilian ad-

Bengal, which I try to seamlessly integrate with the contemporary themes and practices I developed as an adult." What stands out among the vivid hues and layers of Mukhopadhyay's paintings is that she works put women at the centre. A painting shows two traditional women lying on the grass. It's not grass because it's not green but the viewer can imagine and re-imagine it as grass. The backdrop is such that you can even think of it as a memory field or, maybe, the women are just lost in reverie. It also makes a viewer wonder why women, unlike men, are almost never seen lying down casually to relax in a public space. "The painting will not tell you. It will make you imagine and re-imagine something that you already know in a different context," says the artist.

A prominent painting is of a woman, who looks like a mythological figure – except that she is not wearing ornaments. She is flying or floating in the air while other women and children from buildings watch her with wonder. "She could be a representative of the mythological being or it could be your imagination or something that is your aspiration. You want to be a strong woman who is on a higher pedestal. She could be Durga, but she has been reimagined," says Mukhopadhyay. Another goddess in the collection is Kamdhenu, who grants abundance and bounty that typically is understood as wealth. Mukhopadhyay's Kamdhenu is easily identifiable as the cow figure, with wings and golden ornaments, but her wings depict trees and greenery. "Today, the real blessing that we need from a goddess is a good environment and sustainability. Hence, I have portrayed an entire landscape in her wings. So that has been re-imagined in today's context," says the artist. Mukhopadhyay was not always an artist though she has been practicing art for years. She was working in the IT industry for many years and it was around six years ago that she got into professional painting. The turning point came after her mother passed away and Mukhopadhyay started painting as a way of grieving. "I used to paint every day and night. Soon, I thought that since it was giving me so much peace why not take it up as a profession," she says. Mukhopadhyay has been widely exhibited, from the W Gallery Holiday Auction and Exhibition in the US in December 2020, to the Autumn-Winter 2020 Exhibition, "Hope" by the Open School of Creative Arts and Well Being, North Devon, England, to the 89th All India Exhibition 2024, The Indian Academy of Fine Arts, Amritsar, in 2024. With 'Timeless Reimaginings', Mukhopadhyay strikes out as a solo flyer.



to the public. This underpass will serve motorists travelling from Dadar and Prabhadevi towards the coastal road. It will be the only VuP included in the 10.58-km coastal road project. Civic officials stated that this underpass has been designed to accommodate future traffic needs. Vehicles from the Sewri-Worli connector will be able to access this underpass, providing them with a direct route to the western suburbs or the southern tip of Mumbai via the coastal road, significantly reducing travel time. This underpass will run below Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Road, connecting J K Kapur Chowk with the coastal road via the vehicular interchange at Bindoo Madhav Thackeray Chowk at Worli sea face. "The work on the VuP is nearing completion, and we plan to open it by April. Once this VuP is ready, only the work of upgrading the green cover and creating the promenade will remain," said the official. The underpass will be 550 metres long and 11 metres wide. Civic officials have stated that this tunnel will exclusively accommodate southbound vehicles from the Dadar and Prabhadevi areas. It aims to provide direct access for these vehicles, helping alleviate Worli's traffic congestion. Once vehicles enter the underpass, they will have two options: head towards Bandra or continue towards Marine Drive/Nariman Point.



ministration and Police authorities have also met the officer in hospital to give necessary assurances. "On the night of March 13-14, 2025, Colonel Pushpinder Singh Bath, a serving Indian Army officer currently posted at the Army Headquarters in New Delhi, and his son were assaulted in Patiala, Punjab, over a car parking dispute. The incident occurred near a dhaba close to Rajindra Hospital. According to Jaswinder Bath, the Colonel's wife, the family was eating outside their car when several Punjab Police officers, including three identified as Inspectors Harjinder Dhillon, Harry Boparai, and Rauni Singh, demanded they move their vehicle to accommodate the police officials' car. When the Colonel objected to their language, a physical altercation ensued. Jaswinder Bath claimed that the officers and their team attacked her husband and son with baseball bats and sharp-edged weapons, resulting in severe injuries: the Colonel suffered a broken arm, and his son sustained a deep cut on his head. Both were hospitalised and are receiving treatment. She further alleged that despite repeated requests, the authorities delayed recording the victims' statements, and no FIR was initially filed.

Certified copies of land, house deeds in Bengal to become available online only

GNS News Agency, March 19

To put a stop to alleged corruption in the brokering process for land deeds in West Bengal, the state will now entirely digitise it from next month onwards, the finance department said. Currently, certified copies of land or house deeds are available at any registration office in the state for around Rs 150 to 200 each. However, a senior official said, "Because of an unholy nexus of brokers, this cost sometimes goes up to Rs 5,000 and even to Rs 10,000, (and) a person who wants to get a certified copy of a particular deed has to go to the registration office multiple times. It became a Herculean task."

To put an end to "such unnecessary harassment," people will be able to obtain a certified copy online by submitting necessary documents and a regulated fee from April 1 onwards, the department official added. "Those who are not very familiar with the online process can go to our Bangla Sahayak Kendra (BSK) (website) and representatives will help the customer to get a certified copy," the official said. Dated from 1985 to 2025, 3 crore deed documents have been digitised, and after verification, they were uploaded to a website by the Directorate of Registration and Stamp Duty under the state's finance department. Deeds dated from 1965 to 1985 are also in the process of being digitised and uploaded. Through phases like these, the state intends to make every deed document available online. "A certified copy of a deed is a very useful thing for a person to show address proof. In case of a Partition deed, there is only the original. Others would have certified copies," the official explained. Land and house deeds from 2007 onwards were already available online when the state decided to make the online process compulsory. From April onwards, only those documents not available on the website will be permitted to be sought from a registration office.

People abandoning parents will not get their property: Karnataka minister Sharan Prakash Patil



GNS News Agency, March 19

Karnataka minister Sharan Prakash Patil, Karnataka minister Sharan Prakash Patil emphasised that under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007, parents can revoke property transfers if their children fail in their duty of care. The Karnataka government has warned that it will cancel property transfers and wills made in favour of children who abandon their elderly parents in hospitals. This follows reports from the Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS), which has recorded over 150 cases of elderly people being deserted. Similar incidents have been reported from other government medical colleges across the state. In response, Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil directed all government medical colleges to report such cases and file complaints with assistant commissioners (revenue sub-division) to initiate legal action. The issue was raised by the BIMS director during a review meeting at Vikasa Soudha, prompting Patil to instruct Dr B L Sujatha Rathod, Director, Medical Education, to take immediate steps. Medical officers revealed that many elderly parents were left in hospitals under the pretext of treatment but never taken back home. Since hospitals provide food and shelter, some abandon their parents there to avoid responsibility. While financial difficulties were cited in some cases, most parents were deserted after their property was transferred to their children. BIMS has relocated 70 elderly people to retirement homes, but many remain in hospitals awaiting help. Patil emphasised that under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007, parents can revoke property transfers if their children fail in their duty of care. Section 23 of the Act allows property to be returned to the parent if a child abandons them after inheriting assets.

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Chandigarh MC instals QR codes at toilets to report cleanliness issues, water shortages



GNS News Agency, March 22

Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla emphasised the role of technology in making these facilities more accessible. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla emphasised the role of technology in making these facilities more accessible. The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation (MC) has taken steps to improve the cleanliness and accessibility of public and community toilets across the city by installing QR codes at toilets.

"With over 300 public toilets in markets, parks, green

belts, and residential colonies, the MC is ensuring regular maintenance to provide a hygienic and comfortable experience to users," said an MC official. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla emphasised the role of technology in making these facilities more accessible. "All public toilets have been marked on online maps, allowing residents and visitors to easily locate the nearest facility. Additionally, QR codes have been installed at several toilets, enabling users to report cleanliness issues, water shortages, or maintenance needs instantly," the mayor said. "In a move to enhance women's hygiene, toilets for women have been equipped with incinerators for safe disposal of sanitary pads. Moreover, efforts are being made to create green spaces with plants around these facilities, improving air quality and making the surroundings more pleasant," the mayor added. Speaking about the initiative, Municipal Commissioner Amit Kumar said, "The management of these toilets is being handled by market and resident welfare groups, self-help groups, and contractors. A digital tracking system is also in place to monitor cleaning staff, ensuring regular maintenance. Steps are being taken to provide fair wages to all workers involved in the upkeep of these facilities."

Delhi court charges 8 with auto-rickshaw driver's murder, discharges 11

GNS News Agency, March 22

The FIR was registered by the Delhi Crime Branch in March 2020, with the investigation being undertaken by the Special Cell. Delhi riots During the course of arguments, the Delhi Police had relied upon two video clips which showed Babbu being beaten up on the road. These clips were shown to ASJ Pramachala

A Delhi court has framed charges against eight men for the death of an auto-rickshaw driver during the 2020 Delhi riots, and acquitted 11 other accused due to lack of evidence. In an order dated March 18, the court framed the charges against the eight men in connection with the case noting that there was prima facie evidence to proceed against them under Sections 148 (rioting with a deadly weapon), 153-A (promoting enmity between groups), 302 read with 149 (murder committed by unlawful assembly) among others of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

"Videos showed that when the persons assaulting that boy (Babbu) left him on the road in injured condition, the persons from the rival mob came to that boy and probably they lifted him away from that place. So, by no stretch of the imagination, it could be part of the common object of the mob of persons from the Muslim community to assault the victim namely Babbu," Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya



Pramachala of Karkardooma Court said in his order. During the course of arguments, the Delhi Police had relied upon two video clips which showed Babbu being beaten up on the road. These clips were shown to ASJ Pramachala. "The statements of the witnesses and the video of the incident, show that the members of the mob of persons from Muslim community had no role to play in the beating of victim Babbu. Rather they were sympathizers for this victim," the court said after reviewing the videos. The First Information Report (FIR) in this case was registered at the Khajuri Khas Police Station on February 28, 2020, on the basis of the statement of the deceased's brother.

HPPCL Chief Engineer's Death: Family refuses last rites, Sukhu govt transfers power utility MD, sends top official on leave

GNS News Agency, March 22

The Himachal Pradesh government Wednesday transferred HPPCL managing director Harikesh Meena and sent Director (Electrical) Desh Raj on mandatory leave till the completion of a probe into the death of Vimal Negi, a chief engineer with the power utility who went missing on March 10 and whose body was recovered from Gobind Sagar Lake in Bilaspur. Negi's family launched a protest with his mortal remains at HPPCL headquarters at New Shimla and the issue rocked the Vidhan Sabha, Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu announced a probe by an Additional Chief Secretary (ACS)-rank official even as Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur demanded a CBI investigation.

Soon after, Power Secretary Rakesh Kanwar issued a notification stating that Additional Chief Secretary Onkar Sharma "will hold an in-depth inquiry", "associate with the family members, employees and anybody else who wish to give his or her inputs", and submit the inquiry report "within a period of 15 days". It further said that to "ensure the credibility of the inquiry" MD Harikesh Meena, Director (Electrical) and Desh Raj "will not attend their duties in HPPCL". Later, another order was issued by the office of Chief Secretary Prabodh Saxena transferring Meena out of the power utility while adding that "Rakesh Kumar Prajapati, Director (Energy) shall hold the additional charge of the post of MD, HPPCL, with immediate effect...in the public interest". The developments came as Negi's family members reached the HPPCL headquarters with his body and launched a protest against Meena and Desh Raj. Negi's wife Kiran Negi accused the duo of putting her husband under immense pressure. The employees of HPPCL too abstained from the work. Police on Tuesday recovered Negi's body from Gobind Sagar Lake at Swarghat in Bilaspur Tuesday. A driving licence recovered from a pocket helped identify him. Negi had went missing on March 10. His family had claimed that he was dealing with stress and was also facing pressure and a non-conducive environment at the workplace. They had also put up posters announcing a reward of Rs 1 lakh for information leading to his whereabouts. One such poster was seen near the canteen in the Vidhan Sabha premises. In the ongoing Budget session of the Vidhan Sabha, meanwhile, LoP Thakur said that the "mysterious death" of a chief engineer-ranker official "is not a small issue" and demanded that the matter be probed by the CBI. He further said that if the family gives their demand for a CBI probe in writing, "we will talk to the Union government about it". The former chief ministers said that the investigative officers should be free from pressure. Later, in a statement, he said Negi's family have named three officers. "I have asked the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police to convey to the CM that the family members would get up from the protest site only after all the officers were suspended," he said. Thakur said he will again raise the issue in the Vidhan Sabha and that the BJP would also approach the governor over the issue.

Sukhu, meanwhile, informed the House he had personally directed the state police chief on March 14 to look into the matter. "Negi was last spotted at Ghumarwin bus stand. As his family suspect foul play, an ACS-level officer will look into the matter. I want to ensure the House that police investigation is on and nobody involved in this will be spared". At the HPPCL headquarters, Negi's family claimed that "some senior officers" of the power utility had allegedly been mentally harassing and pressuring the "chief engineer to do wrong things". Based on his wife Kiran's complaint, a case under sections 108 (abetment to suicide) and 3 (5) (joint criminal liability) of the BNS have been registered at New Shimla Police station, police said.



Kiran, however, said, "It is not suicide but murder. He was denied holidays and harassed even though he was unwell and his blood pressure was fluctuating. He was forced to work late hours...the relentless pressure and harassment drove my husband to take his own life". Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi met the chief engineer's family at the protest site and assured of action. The minister said the extreme step by a government officer under stress was a cause of concern.

"There is an a need to prepare a standard operation procedure for working in government departments so that such incidents do not happen in future," he told reporters. Kiran, however, demanded a CBI probe into the matter and added that the family will not perform the last rites till they get justice. HPPCL and electricity board employees organized a silent rally at Reckong Peo. They too demanded a CBI inquiry into the case. In a letter to the chief minister, a joint front of the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Employees and Engineers said that the circumstances surrounding Negi's death raise serious concerns about "potential mismanagement and undue pressure". It alleged that they have all been through "such pressure in the past two years", and demanded an independent investigation into the matter and the immediate suspension of the current management of HPPCL. BJP leader Surat Negi, meanwhile asked, "Was Vimal Negi under pressure to carry out unethical activities? If a senior official is involved, will the government take strict action?" He further asked whether the case was linked to a solar project in Una district. He urged that all documents related to the project should be examined by an independent agency if there is any connection. Earlier in the day, doctors conducted a postmortem examination at AIIMS, Bilaspur. The report, however, was not made public.

Six persons injured in clash over land in Medak's Timmapur

GNS News Agency, March 22, Medak: Six persons of a family were injured as two families clashed with each other over a land dispute at Timmapur village in Shivvampet mandal late on Wednesday night. According to locals, two brothers Balaiah and Bikshapathi were living in adjacent houses in the village. One of them objected to the other drilling a borewell, which sparked the clash. When the village went into a deep sleep after the argument between the families, Bikshapathi, his sons Prasad and Raju attacked his brother Balaiah, wife Anjamma, sons Narsimulu, Yadagiri and two others persons with sickles and axes. The condition of Yadagiri and Anjamma is critical.

'Dog meat' recovered from momos factory in Mohali DC: 'Reports misleading, animal husbandry experts examining meat sample'



GNS News Agency, March 22

Deputy Commissioner Komal Mittal said that "reports falsely identifying the meat used in momos factory as dog meat are misleading". Deputy Commissioner Komal Mittal said that "reports falsely identifying the meat used in momos factory as dog meat are misleading". With reports of food department officers recently found "a dog's severed head in the refrigerator of a momos and spring roll factory" in Punjab's Mohali doing rounds, Deputy Commissioner Komal Mittal said that "reports falsely identifying the meat used in momos factory as dog meat are misleading". "A health de-

partment examination ruled out the recovered meat sample to be of a dog. Animal husbandry experts are conducting further examination of the sample to ascertain the animal whose meat it was," the DC said, urging people not to spread rumours.

Taking serious cognisance of food being prepared in unhygienic conditions, Mittal warned that no one would be spared for endangering public health through unsafe food practices. She said Food safety, health, and Municipal Corporation teams conducted raids in the Matour area on Sunday and collected multiple food samples, including vegetables and other items, for examination. Ordering an FIR against those responsible for these hazardous food conditions, she warned that "strict legal action will be taken". SSP Deepak Pareek said an FIR was registered under sections 272 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 274 (adulteration of food or drink intended for sale) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for gross negligence. The DC also directed the health, food safety, and Municipal Corporation teams to inspect street food vendors in Mohali, ensuring proper hygiene and food safety compliance. "Strict penalties will be imposed for violations," she added. Municipal Commissioner Parminder Pal Singh was instructed to regulate unauthorised food carts and take firm action against illegal slaughtering.

Ground water level down 5.41m in 10 yrs, Ambala most affected

GNS News Agency, March 22

Haryana has witnessed an average decline of 5.41 meters in its ground water table in 10 years from 2014 to 2024, the most in Ambala, the state government informed the Assembly. From -10.5 metres in June 2014, Ambala saw its groundwater level drop to 29.25 metres in June 2024. State irrigation and water resources minister Shruti Choudhry made a written statement to the Assembly in this regard in response to the concerns raised by several Opposition legislators over the decline in the quantity and quality of the groundwater. The minister said: "Haryana is a water deficit state with respect to surface and ground water resources. The ground water level in the state particularly in the freshwater zone is depleting fast due to heavy exploitation and is a very serious problem. Increasing demand and scarcity of groundwater resources underlines the importance of artificial recharge and water conservation. The state average decline in water table from June, 2014 to June, 2024 is -5.41 meters." As per the report of Ground Water Resource Estimation (GWRE), 2024, the groundwater extraction in as many as 88 of the total 143 blocks has been found "over-exploited" while 11 blocks as "critical" and 8 as "semi-critical" leaving only 36 blocks in the "safe category". She added that "the reports of Ground Water Cell (Haryana) and Central Ground Water Board are in coherence and indicate the deteriorating quality of ground water". Referring to the concerns of the legislators over the quality and the quantity of the groundwater, she said: "We are equally concerned like other legislators. The government is committed to improving the situation. The government is making efforts to maintain the quality and quantity of the ground water. We are monitoring the quality and quantity of the underground water at 2,200 observation points regularly." In addition, the Central Ground Water Board also monitors the quality and quantity of water. Research is being done to solve the problem of groundwater salinity and waterlogging. She added: "The improvement in the quality is a slow process. Studies have indicated lack of efforts during the past decades responsible for the current situation leading to ground water salinity and water logging." Terming it a very important issue, former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that the Haryana government should have the Supreme Court verdict in its favour on SYL canal implemented apart from coming up with schemes such as Dadpur Nalvi canal to recharge ground water.

As many as six Congress MLAs Bharat Bhusan Batra, Geeta Bhukkal, Balran Dang, Jassi Petwar, Vikas



Sharan and Pooja jointly sought to draw the attention of the House to the issue. They said: "Groundwater quality in Haryana is facing degradation especially in the district of Ambala, Bhiwani, Charkhi Dabri, Faridabad, Fatehabad, Gurgaon, Nuh, Palwal, Hisar, Jhajjar, Jind, Rohtak, Sonapat, Rewari etc." They said that Haryana has the highest number of districts — 6 out of the top 15 districts in India — with groundwater electrical conductivity (EC) value exceeding the permissible limit. Electrical conductivity is a measure of the salinity of the groundwater, calculated as microsiemens/cm (µS/cm). When the EC value is between 1500 and 15,000 µS/cm, groundwater is considered to be brackish. In another joint statement to the Assembly, four Congress legislators—Aftab Ahmed, Kuldeep Vats, Mohd. Israail and Mohammad Ilyas referred to the Ground Water Quality Report, 2024 released by Central Ground Water Board and stated "the groundwater in the several districts of Haryana contain uranium, arsenic, chloride and fluoride in the concentration exceeding the permissible limits". They added that the depletion in water table is now a cause of concern in 14 of 22 districts of Haryana. The groundwater quality in Haryana is facing continued degradation in the Mewat area and other districts of Haryana. Explaining the government efforts, Choudhry said that the Irrigation Department freed 26,110 acres from waterlogging by spending Rs 108.78 crore in 2018-19. Financial assistance has been received from the World Bank to eliminate waterlogging in 2 lakh acres by 2026-2031. She added that efforts are being made to maintain water quality under the "Water Secure Haryana" scheme. Sub-surface and vertical drainage system is being implemented to solve the problem of waterlogging in 13 districts — Rohtak, Jhajjar, Sonapat, Bhiwani, Hisar, Jind, Charkhi Dabri, Fatehabad, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Sirsa, Palwal and Mewat).

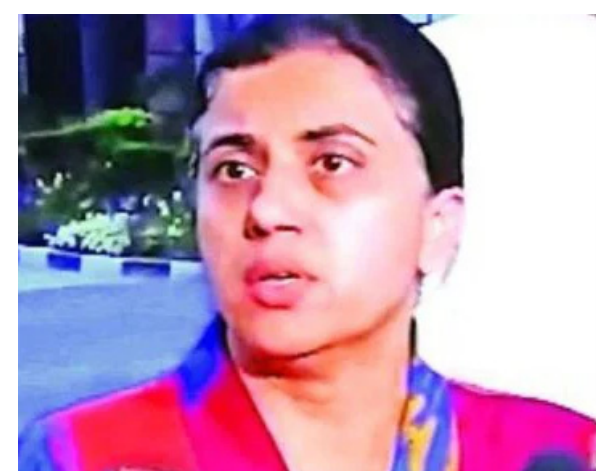
Week on, Punjab Police yet to 'name' suspended officers

GNS News Agency, March 22

Colonel Bath's wife Jaswinder Bath had identified three of the 12 accused police personnel. Colonel Bath's wife Jaswinder Bath had identified three of the 12 accused police personnel. The Opposition launched a scathing attack on the AAP government seeking dismissal of the 12 police officials involved in the assault on an Army Colonel and his son in Patiala even as the Punjab Police is yet to name the 12 accused personnel even after a week of the incident. On March 13, Colonel Pushpinder Singh Bath, currently posted at the Army Headquarters in New Delhi, and his son were assaulted in Patiala over car parking while they were having food at a dhaba close to Rajindra Hospital.

Though government suspended the 12 police officers involved in the attack and Patiala SSP Nanak Singh apologised to the family, the FIR was registered against unidentified persons. Queries by the Indian Express and other media outlets about the identities of the 12 policemen have been stonewalled by the police. Unofficially, only the names of three SHO's — Harry Boparai, Ronnie Singh and Harjinder Dhillon — are making rounds, that too after Colonel Bath's 'identified' them. Terming the incident as a "shame for Punjab", the Opposition demanded strict action from the Bhagwant Mann government. Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal asked CM Mann why his government was shielding the accused police officers. "Colonel Bath's wife is running from pillar to post seeking justice for her husband and son as the Patiala Police have filed an FIR against unknown people in the case. This incident has brought shame to the Punjab Police as well as to the entire state. I...demand the immediate dismissal and arrest of the guilty officers," he said in a post on X. Senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia wrote on X, "If Army officers are not safe in Punjab then what will be the fate of the common man? Filing an open FIR in an incident of attack on defender of the nation is a blatant exercise by the Punjab Police to save their own personnel." He added that the accused policemen are supposed to be encounter specialists and asked DGP Gaurav Yadav if encounter specialists have been kept in the police force to break the law. "When the policemen have been identified, then why have they not been named in the FIR and dismissed yet," he asked.

Congress MLA Sukhpal Khaira said the Patiala SSP



was trying to force the family of the victims to reach a compromise. "This is very shameful. The AAP government has turned Punjab into a police state. These (accused) policemen...told them (Colonel and his son) that they are coming after doing an encounter and will do their encounter too," he alleged. He also slammed AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal for keeping mum on the incident. Meanwhile, the ex-servicemen in the state rallied around the Colonel and announced a demonstration in Mohali on Thursday. According to a statement released by Lt Col SS Sohi (retd) and Brigadier Harwant Singh (retd), of Ex-Servicemen Grievances Cell and All India Defence Brotherhood, respectively, a march will be taken out to the Deputy Commissioner's office and a memorandum will be submitted demanding dismissal of the accused officers. "A shocking and shameful act of police brutality against a Colonel and his son in Patiala has outraged the ex-servicemen community. This is not just an attack on individuals but an insult to those who have dedicated their lives to the nation. We cannot remain silent. All ex-servicemen across Punjab must mobilize and submit a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner of their respective districts, demanding that the Government of India take immediate action to ensure the safety and security of serving personnel, veterans, and their families all over India."

Air raid sirens sound in Israel after a missile attack from Yemen



GNS News Agency, March 22

In Jerusalem, several explosions were heard shortly after the sirens sounded. There were no immediate reports of injuries. Yemen's Houthis group this week resumed missile attacks following the collapse of Israel's ceasefire with Hamas. Police also reported sirens in central Israel in the 4 a.m. attack. The MADA rescue service says it has received no reports of injuries. Israel said Wednesday (March 19) its troops retook part of a corridor that bisects Gaza, and its defense minister warned that attacks would intensify until Hamas frees dozens of hostages and gives up control of the territory.

The Military said it had retaken part of the Netzarim

Corridor that divides northern Gaza from the south, and from where it had previously withdrawn as part of a ceasefire that began in January. That truce was shattered Tuesday by Israeli airstrikes that killed more than 400 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. The advances on the ground by Israel on Wednesday — which included sending more troops to southern Gaza — threatened to drag the sides into all-out war again. The ceasefire had given war-weary Palestinians some respite, allowed a much-needed surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza — and led to the release of dozens of hostages who had been held for more than 15 months. Within Israel, the resumption of airstrikes and ground maneuvers has raised concerns about the fate of roughly two dozen hostages held by Hamas who are believed to still be alive. Thousands of Israelis took part in anti-government demonstrations in Jerusalem, with many calling for a deal to bring the captives home. A Hamas spokesman, Abdel-Latif al-Qanou, said the moves by ground forces in Gaza was a clear sign that Israel had backed out of the truce and was reimposing a "blockade." There have been no reports of rocket attacks by Hamas since Tuesday's bombardment. Also Wednesday, the United Nations said one of its employees was killed in Gaza and five others were wounded in an apparent strike on a guesthouse. It was not immediately clear who was behind the strike, the U.N. said.

What are the different risks and rewards of using UAVs? | Explained



GNS News Agency, March 22

The sight of two Chinese Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) over waters near Okinawa recently had Japan scrambling to pursue them. Yet, the level of alarm was considerably lower than what it would have been if the People's Liberation Army Air Force's piloted aircraft had been sighted near Japanese airspace. Arguably, in most cases, UAVs are seen as less of a threat than a fighter jet in the same context.

Why are UAVs seen as less of a threat?

Many features factor into this perception. UAVs are, by and large, less dangerous, since even those UAVs that are capable of carrying weapon payloads are still less capable than fighter jets; a large proportion of UAVs are not armed and serve surveillance and reconnaissance purposes. Additionally, the lack of direct human presence makes them seem like less of an instrument of state power. By virtue of being unmanned, sending a UAV for a reconnaissance mission seems like a low-hanging fruit, where the mission may be just as effective without endangering human life, or risking an expensive inhabited aircraft. Even if UAVs are downed by enemy forces, they seem less of a burden financially.

Are there recent examples of this?

Instances of drones being shot down and met with a relatively restrained response are examples of this. For in-

stance, in 2019 an American surveillance drone was shot down by Iran over the Strait of Hormuz using an Iranian surface-to-air missile. The Iranians called it an act of self-defence as the drone, they said, was within their airspace, while the U.S. claimed it was flying over international waters. Tensions were already high then, and U.S. President Trump ordered a strike, but it was soon aborted. Although U.S. forces maintained readiness in the region, no overt military retaliation occurred. Similarly, when Russia brought down an American MQ-9 Reaper UAV in 2023 there was no major retaliation. While this perceived lower level of threat can prevent actions from resulting in conventional warfare, it can also indirectly encourage risk-taking behaviours. While countries would not typically be willing to infiltrate another country's airspace or fly close to foreign territories in a fighter jet, the costs of losing an unmanned aircraft are lower and therefore countries are more willing to utilise them for such missions. Given that UAVs are also met with less drastic forms of retaliation, countries can see them as an easy way to perform actions that they would not otherwise.

What are the repercussions for India?

The challenge for India is to figure out how to effectively deal with UAVs, especially in relation to its neighbouring countries. In the case of Pakistan, smaller propeller-powered UAVs are often used to transport arms and drugs across the border, with the Pakistani government not taking accountability. India will need to figure out how to deal with such incursions without utilising expensive missiles to bring them down like it did in 2019. Air-to-air missiles like the one India used via a Su-30 in 2019 are far more expensive than the dual-use UAVs they are used to bring down. Pakistan has not taken any major retaliatory actions when India has shot down UAVs. Similarly, Bangladesh recently deployed Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 UAVs near the Indian border for surveillance. In the case of larger fixed-wing UAVs like the Bayraktar TB-2, which is akin to most inhabited military aircraft in terms of size and endurance, in the unlikely event that it ventures into Indian airspace, given the lower associated level of threat, India will have to figure out how to address the issue without risking further escalation.

A delimitation red flag — the lessons from J&K, Assam

GNS News Agency, March 22

As the debate on a fresh delimitation of legislative constituencies heats up, a number of concerns have been aired along with their solutions, including the very sensible proposal to freeze the number of parliamentary seats but increase the number of Assembly seats in States whose population has grown. That is the more democratic formula since Members of the Legislative Assembly are the first port of call for their constituents whereas Members of Parliament represent their constituents on national policy (broadly speaking).

There are, too, other ways to accommodate the well-founded fears of the southern States that an expanded imbalance of power that a fresh delimitation will create. For example, Rajya Sabha seats could be redistributed in equal measure to the northern, central, eastern, western and southern States, which are already grouped into these five geographic zones, in theory each with its own zonal council. Most of these have not met since 2023, with the exception of the Western Zonal Council, which met in February 2025, while the Southern Zonal Council has not met since 2022, though a meet was planned in Chennai in January 2025.

Naysayers will argue that the zonal councils were intended to settle disputes between States while the Inter-State Council could deal with both State-State and Centre-State relations. In practice, however, the councils take up a series of issues, from Aadhaar to good governance. Given their range, perhaps they need to be freed from the mantle of the Home Ministry. Zonal councils could coordinate with the Union executive through the now dormant Inter-State Council (according to its website, it last met in 2016), which requires greater authority as well as permanence.

If combined, the two proposals above would deepen both electoral representation and federalism. But there are other potential pitfalls for the delimitation in 2026 that require guarding against. Two State-level delimitations have been recently carried out: the first was in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, and the second in Assam in 2023. Each emits warning signals for the exercise in 2026.

The Jammu and Kashmir delimitation was widely criticised by all the political parties in this former State, barring the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Numerically, its addition of six seats for Jammu and one seat for the valley gave a Jammu elector's vote the weight of 1.2 as against one for the Valley elector. It created new constituencies which made no administrative or geographic sense. Indeed, its inclusion of Jammu's Poonch and Jaurouli into the valley's Anantnag Lok Sabha seat created both administrative and geographic difficulties given that the former are part of the Pir Panjal range, and the latter is in the Jhelum valley. Worse still, the redrawing of Assembly constituencies suggested that the Delimitation Commission used communal criteria for demarcation. All six of the new constituencies, i.e., Jashrota, Ramgarh, Ramnagar, Vaishno Devi, Padder-Nagseni and Doda West, are Hindu majority.

Further, Muslim majority Kishtwar was turned into a Hindu majority constituency by adding areas of the former Inderwal constituency. Vaishno Devi, Padder and Doda West have electorates as small as 50,000 in comparison to Muslim majority constituencies such as Dooro (1.92 lakh) and Surankote (1.77 lakh). Neither of the three is geographically distinct from other parts of its district. The Assam delimitation followed a slightly different pattern with similar out-



comes. The number of Assembly seats was frozen, but the Assam cabinet pre-emptively folded four districts back into the districts from which they had originally been separated, reducing the number of districts from 35 to 31. The merger led to a loss of as many as 10 Muslim majority constituencies — South Salmara, Barpeta (two seats), Darrang, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Hailakandi and Karimganj — while Hindu and tribal seats increased. As in Jammu and Kashmir, the Assam delimitation also created constituencies of a vastly different population size. In other words, population bias is not the only danger that opponents of the delimitation exercise in 2026 should fear. As the Jammu and Kashmir and Assam examples suggest, recent delimitation commissions have not hesitated to create small population constituencies alongside large population ones when it has served the communal purpose of further marginalising minorities. Is there any reason to believe that the same tactic will not be deployed during the delimitation in 2026?

Surprisingly, the Opposition has not focused on this danger as yet. It should. All the Opposition-ruled States have large minority populations, mostly Muslim. True, regional identity outstrips communal identity in most — for example, the majority of Bengali or Tamil Hindus, Muslims and Christians voted for their relatively secular regional party, respectively, namely, the Trinamool Congress and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, in previous Assembly and parliamentary elections. But there is no guarantee that this non-communal voting pattern will continue. On the contrary, the communal demarcation of constituencies is likely to polarise voters even in the southern States. It certainly had that impact in Jammu and Assam, where almost all the new constituencies voted for the BJP. We tend to believe that the Union administration's policies in border States will not be replicated in the heartland. That used to be true, but is no longer so. The use of draconian legislation against dissent used to be most common in conflict areas, especially on the borders; it has now spread across the country. The maltreatment of minorities has similarly multiplied. The power imbalance between the large northern States and the rest that will result from a purely population-based delimitation is, undoubtedly, a clear and present danger. But it should not be allowed to overshadow the other clear and present danger — of communal demarcation of electoral constituencies. Each threatens the unity of this country in a different way. The first step divides the more developed States from the less developed States by further reducing the influence of the more developed States in the union. The second step divides the people by religion. Together, step one and step two constitute a formidable attack on the foundations of our pluralist federation. They must be halted.

The road to a \$1 trillion economy

GNS News Agency, March 22

These days, Tamil Nadu has been at the centre of national attention over a host of issues such as delimitation and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) and the use of the Tamil letter 'Roo' ('????') instead of the Indian currency symbol '₹' in the promotional logo for the latest State Budget. Amid the brouhaha, the State government has brought out its maiden Economic Survey, a "report card" on the state of the Tamil Nadu economy.

The document has been published at a time when Tamil Nadu has set itself a more ambitious target of becoming a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 than its southern neighbours — Karnataka by 2032; Andhra Pradesh (\$2.4 trillion) by 2047; Telangana by 2034-35 and Kerala by 2047. In an article published in The Hindu in December 2022, C. Rangarajan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and K.R. Shanmugam, former Director of the Madras School of Economics, stated that for the State to achieve its goal, it would need to grow at a nominal rate of about 18% and a real rate of 13%. However, according to the Survey, the State grew at an annual average rate of 8.2% over the last two years. The State government's official document, while discussing the target, acknowledges that Tamil Nadu "will need to sustain an annual growth rate of over 12%, driven by industrial expansion, infrastructure development and digital transformation." Even though the document, published by the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, does not outwardly share the optimism of the State government with regard to the target of \$1 trillion, it talks of the strengths and capabilities of Tamil Nadu, all of

which can be productively used to position the State "strongly for sustained economic leadership" in the country. One of the highlights of the document is the climate risk assessment, a study which has been done by Anna University, Chennai. Using data from the 30 years ending in 2014, the study has given projections of the trends up to 2100 CE, forecasting a rise in the annual mean maximum temperature, the number of heat wave days and the annual average rainfall. As this area directly concerns people, the Survey's analysis of the study requires larger debate across different sections of society. In a way, the Survey has set an agenda for the public discourse on the vital subject of climate change. Another subject that the Survey has discussed is employment, where not-so-positive trends have been captured. This is not to gloss over the observation in the document that on the overall, there are indications of a better quality of employment with a higher share of the State's workforce, including women, in regular employment. One of the findings of the Survey is that the unemployment rate has consistently been higher in urban areas than in rural regions. Also, unemployment is more prevalent among those holding graduate and postgraduate (PG) degrees or diploma or certificate qualifications compared to others. Almost one-fifth of women graduates remain unemployed, and the unemployment rate with PG degrees is 11.6%. At the all-India level, the corresponding figures are 20.4% and 22.5%. Even though the Survey has not discussed software exports much, it is well known that Tamil Nadu is way behind two of its "flashy" neighbours — Karnataka and Telangana.

'No limits to dreams': Kerala Assembly on Sunita Williams' achievement

GNS News Agency, March 22

The Kerala Assembly on Wednesday (March 19, 2025) congratulated NASA astronaut Sunita Williams on her return to Earth after a nine-month long space exploration mission and said that her achievement shows that "there are no limits to dreams". Speaker A.N. Shamseer said that Ms. Williams' achievement was a "sparkling example" of courage and dedication by a person of Indian origin and therefore, it was a moment of pride for the country as well.

He said that the Indian-origin astronaut showed her inner strength to the world through her journey and her achievement should be a source of encouragement for women and youth across the world. "It shows that there are no limits to dreams. We (Assembly) extend our heartfelt congratulations to Sunita Williams and the others who helped her in her journey," Mr. Shamseer said. NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Ms. Williams returned to Earth on Tuesday, hitching a different ride home to close out a saga that began with a bungled test flight more than nine months ago. Their SpaceX capsule parachuted into the Gulf of



Mexico in the early evening, just hours after departing the International Space Station. Splashdown occurred off the coast of Tallahassee in the Florida Panhandle, bringing their unplanned odyssey to an end. A former US Navy captain, Ms. Williams, 59, was born to a Gujarati father, Deepak Pandya, hailing from Jhulasan in Mehsana district, and a Slovenian mother, Ursuline Bonnie Pandya, on September 19, 1965 in Euclid, Ohio.

Torture shadows India's justice system



In an expansive interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has emphatically declared that torture in any form is an unacceptable infringement of the sacrosanct right to dignity and privacy

GNS News Agency, March 22

The ruling by the King's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice in London on February 28 in the Sanjay Bhandari extradition case, upholding the fugitive's defence against extradition, and the proceedings in Tahawwur Rana's appeal in the U.S. Supreme Court challenging the latter's extradition are significant judicial developments with larger implications for a constitutional state. Hopefully, these proceedings will spur the government to reinforce India's claim as a professed defender of human rights by enacting a comprehensive law against torture, enabling it to ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT). This is because the defence of Bhandari, facing Indian prosecutors for tax evasion and money laundering, and of Rana, whose extradition is sought for his role as a conspirator in the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attack, is premised essentially on credible evidence of endemic custodial torture in India including its non-ratification of the Convention.

In Bhandari's case, Justices Holroyde and Steyn, while denying the Indian government's plea for extradition, found that Bhandari faced a real risk of custodial torture in Indian jails and that India had not ratified the UNCAT. Rana, in his renewed application for a stay on extradition to India pending the decision of his Habeas Corpus petition, has cited the U.K. judgment and its reasoning. Other fugitives from Indian law have also challenged the government's extradition request on similar grounds, exposing a legal lacuna that has compromised the effectiveness of the country's criminal justice system. Although one of the earliest Unilateral Declarations against Torture (Resolution number 32/64) was initiated by India in the UN General Assembly and has ratified several other international treaties against torture, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976), its ambivalence in ratifying the UNCAT is confounding. Articles 51(c), and 253 of the Constitution mandate respect for international treaties to which India is a party (NALSA (2014), Vishakha (1997) et al. Regrettably, India finds itself in the company of discredited non-ratifying

dictatorial regimes such as Angola, Brunei, Comoros, the Gambia, Haiti, and Sudan.

Reflecting a broad political consensus on the outlawing of torture based upon deeply felt popular sensitivities, the Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha had recommended a comprehensive anti-torture legislation as early as 2010. The Law Commission also recommended this in its 273rd Report (2017) and furnished a draft of the proposed law for consideration. The Human Rights Commission of India has similarly supported a stand-alone domestic law against torture. In an expansive interpretation of Article 21 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has declared that torture in any form is an unacceptable infringement of the sacrosanct right to dignity and privacy (D.K. Basu (1997), Puttaswamy (2017), Nambi Narayanan (2018), Romila Thapar (2018). Even so, in Ashwani Kumar (2019), the constitutional court found itself unable to even nudge the government to consider enacting the requisite law, despite its several pronouncements suggesting suitable laws on different subjects (Tehseen Poonawalla (2018), Ranveer Allahabadi (2025), etc.). The Court failed to appreciate that "a lack of legislation may be contrary to the principle of legal certainty," that "it is the function of the court to provide effective remedy" and that "it is legitimate for constitutional courts to caution legislatures against their failure to introduce what they consider as adequate legislation." [Opinion No. 18 [2015] Consultative Council of European judges]. Nor did it heed D.Y. Chandrachud's declaration in Jeet S. Bish (2007) that the doctrine of separation of powers "allows methods to be used to prod and communicate to an institution either its shortfalls or excesses in discharging its duties..." Even as the Court cautioned in Sharaya Banu (2017) that constitutional rights can be defeated through inaction, indifference, or ambivalence on the part of other organs of the State, its failure to facilitate the enactment of a comprehensive law against torture is an impermissible abdication of its remit.

In these premises, the extradition cases raise profoundly important questions about a democratic State balking at fulfilling its compelling constitutional and international obligations. Surely, the price of security cannot be an unconscionable brutalisation of the incarcerated. Whether a democratic State can, by its inaction, demonstrate a brazen disdain for national consensus on a core humanitarian issue is a disconcerting interrogatory. India's continued failure to enact a credible anti-torture law indicates the impoverishment of our politics and the indifference of political parties as democratic agents, to mediate fundamental policy choices in furtherance of the republic's core values. Whether or not the cited cases validate Professor Harold Laski's profound insight that "ideas must wait upon events that give them birth," only time will tell. Wiser with the lesson of Guantanamo Bay that torture in State custody irretrievably dents democracy's soft power, the Indian State is expected to vindicate the republic's foundational principles by ratifying the Convention. It is time for a nation wedded to democracy and seeking a role as the world's moral arbiter to recognise that a failing democracy is antithetical to a resurgent Bharat and that torture in any form is "... a wound in the soul so intangible that there is no way to heal it..."

Sri Lankan Parliament to debate report on 'torture camp' from 1980s



GNS News Agency, March 22

Sri Lanka's Parliament will debate a nearly three-decade-old report probing allegations of unlawful detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings by the State between 1988 and 1990, the ruling National People's Power [NPP] government has said. Leader of the House Bimal Rathnayake on Friday (March 14, 2025) tabled the report in the Parliament and said the government would seek the Attorney General's opinion on it. The report came into focus recently, following Doha-headquartered television channel Al Jazeera's interview with former President Ranil Wickremesinghe, in which he was asked about torture allegations during the period. Mr. Wickremesinghe — who was Minister of Industries in President Ranasinghe Premadasa's government at the time was accused of enabling the "torture camp" — denied any wrongdoing.

The ambit of the report covers the period of the second armed insurrection in the late 1980s of the leftist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which is the chief constituent of the ruling NPP coalition. The 'Batalanda commission report', released in 1998 by a panel appointed by former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, investigated serious allegations of torture by state actors, targeting members of or those allegedly linked to the JVP. The JVP's youth had taken up arms [for the second time] against the state, its representatives, government supporters, and dissidents from the Left, as they resisted the Premadasa government's policies. According to multiple accounts of the period, the state responded brutally.

The 'Batalanda commission report' pertains to a government-backed counter-subversive unit, or the 'Batalanda detention centre', run in Colombo's neighbouring Gampaha district, as part of the state's operation to put down the insurgency. The report, which also details the violence committed by the JVP, notes, "The terrorism of the JVP was met with State Terrorism". The renewed attention to the 1998 report has generated interest within Sri Lanka's hu-

man rights community that has repeatedly cited impunity for state actors as the main impediment to justice, with activists reminding successive governments of the many calls for justice from the Tamil community that witnessed gross human rights violations during the civil war. Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena, constitutional lawyer and author of 'Commissions of Inquiry; Still Seeking Justice in Sri Lanka' said the significance [of tabling or debating the report] lies not in the "political sound and fury", but in the possible legal action on its findings. "Will that [parliamentary] debate be used for political capital by the government? That will only continue an entrenched pattern of politicised use of Commissions of Inquiry reports. On the other hand, if we talk of 'JVP terrorism' and 'state terrorism', this debate should include other Commissions of Inquiry reports that comprehensively dealt with state and counter-state terror from the north to the south during the 1980s", she said. The focus, Ms. Pinto-Jayawardena contended, should be ensuring systemic accountability in properly enforcing the criminal justice system. "The effort should not be limited to a politician who happens to be an opponent of the government or to one commission report." With regard to legal implications, she pointed to a 2008 amendment to Sri Lanka's Commissions of Inquiry Act (1948) by which the AG has the discretion to institute criminal proceedings in a court of law in respect of any offence, based on material collected during the course of an investigation or inquiry. "This was a hard-won victory by civil society activists. It remains to be seen if this amendment can be applied retrospectively... where criminal justice is concerned, we badly need to apply the doctrine of command responsibility effectively. Certainly on that and in other respects, the Batalanda Report may afford some scope for proceeding further, but the AG will have an unenviable task of meeting the requisite standard of the criminal law," Ms. Pinto-Jayawardena said. According to Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, Professor of History at the University of Colombo, the government would not have tabled the report in Parliament but for the pressure following Mr. Wickremesinghe's recent media interview. All the same, he sees value in creating a public discourse around the report. "It would be ideal to set up a credible Truth Commission to investigate the role of the State in the past, not just in the south but also in the north." In his view, bringing perpetrators to book appears less realistic given there are "wheels within wheels", and it is hard to prove [perpetrators'] responsibility in a court of law [in all cases]. "But it is very important for us to know how exactly the state worked, how it used counter-insurgency measures in the past, whether it was against the JVP or the LTTE, because those structures are still embedded in our state apparatus," Prof. Dewasiri said.

MH370 plane search: After 11 years, exploration firm Ocean Infinity restarts search

GNS News Agency, March 22

A fresh search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has been launched more than a decade after the plane went missing in one of aviation's greatest enduring mysteries. Maritime exploration firm Ocean Infinity has resumed the hunt for the missing plane, Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said.

Mr. Loke told reporters contract details between Malaysia and the firm were still being finalised but welcomed the "proactiveness of Ocean Infinity to deploy their ships" to begin the search for the plane which went missing in March 2014. Mr. Loke added that details on how long the search would last had not been negotiated yet. He also did not provide details on when exactly the British firm kicked off its hunt. The Malaysian government in December had said it had agreed to launch a new search for MH370, which disappeared more than a decade ago. The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people disappeared from radar screens on March 8, 2014 while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has never been found. "They (Ocean Infinity) have convinced us that they are ready," said Mr. Loke. "That's why the Malaysian government is proceeding with this," he added. In December, Mr. Loke had said new search would be on the same "no find, no fee" principle as Ocean Infinity's previous search, with the government only paying out if it finds the aircraft. The contract was for 18 months and Malaysia would pay \$70 million to the company if the plane was found, Loke



previously had said. Ocean Infinity, based in Britain and the United States, carried out an unsuccessful hunt in 2018. The company's first efforts followed a massive Australia-led search for the aircraft that lasted three years before it was suspended in January 2017.

The Australia-led search covered 120,000 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean but found hardly any trace of the plane, with only some pieces of debris picked up. The plane's disappearance has long been the subject of theories — ranging from the credible to outlandish — including that veteran pilot Zaharie Ahmad Shah had gone rogue. A final report into the tragedy released in 2018 pointed to failings by air traffic control and said the course of the plane was changed manually.

U.S. investigators say Alaska plane was overweight for icy conditions in crash that killed 10



GNS News Agency, March 22

This image released by the National Transportation Safety Board, shows ice accumulation that was observed by investigators on the rear stabilizers of a plane, Feb. 7, 2025, the day after a small commuter plane that crashed in western Alaska on a flight that was bound for the hub community of Nome. This image released by the National Transportation Safety Board, shows ice accumulation that was observed by investigators on the rear stabilizers of a plane, Feb. 7, 2025, the day after a small commuter plane that crashed in western Alaska on a flight that was bound for the hub community of Nome.

A commuter plane that crashed on sea ice off Alaska, killing all 10 people on board, was half a ton overweight for a trip into icy conditions, the National Transportation Safety Board said in a preliminary report released Tuesday. The weight is just a "data point" in the ongoing investigation, cautioned Clint Johnson, who runs the NTSB's Alaska region. A final report including probable causes can take a year or more after a crash. The Feb. 6 Bering Air crash was one of Alaska's deadliest plane crashes this century and the third major U.S. aviation mishap in an eight-day stretch. A commercial jetliner and an Army helicopter collided over the Potomac River on Jan. 29, killing 67 people. A medical transportation plane crashed in Philadelphia on Jan. 31, killing all six on board and another person on the ground. Small airplanes like the Cessna Caravan in this crash are the work-

horses of Alaska, where most of the state's 200-plus villages are beyond the road system and only accessible by air or boat. Residents rely on the commuter planes like people living in the Lower 48 depend on cars, using them to get to medical appointments and meetings, to go shopping, to visit relatives or to attend away high school sports games.

The single-engine turboprop plane was flying that afternoon from the community of Unalakleet to Nome, a trip of about 150 miles (240 kilometers), when authorities lost contact less than an hour after takeoff. David Olson, director of operations for Bering Air, said at the time. The Cessna Caravan went missing about 30 miles (50 kilometers) from its destination. A review of the plane's contents following the crash indicated its estimated gross weight at departure was about 9,865 pounds (4475 kilograms) — about 1,058 pounds (480 kilograms) over the maximum takeoff gross weight for a flight into areas where icing is in the forecast, the report says. The pilot operating handbook notes the maximum allowable takeoff gross weight for a flight into such conditions was the same as the basic airplane, 8,807 pounds (3995 kilograms). Johnson said it remains to be determined whether the overweight conditions were a factor in the accident. Icing conditions were forecast along the route, and it was snowing, with some freezing rain in Nome, he said. Officials are trying to determine what information was relayed to the pilot, what information he had when he left and whether ice conditions existed at the crash location, he said. Weather is often a factor in remote Alaska, and while flying is commonplace to most Alaskans, it can be a dangerous endeavor, said Whitney Power Wilson, an aviation accident litigation lawyer and pilot in Anchorage. "Icing should be a concern for all pilots, but especially for pilots of smaller aircraft and pilots who frequently operate in conditions conducive to icing," she said. "The weight of an aircraft, the fact that icing is something that we're dealing with, those considerations have to be taken seriously because the consequences can be so tragic." Investigators also looked at the plane's altitude. It was flying in an area where moderate icing was possible between 2,000 feet (610 meters) and 8,000 feet (2,438 meters).

Bridging Science and Policy: How localised climate data can shape India's resilient future



GNS News Agency, March 22

In a rapidly warming world, climate data is not just numbers on a screen, it holds the key to survival. For decades, climate projections in India remained largely inaccessible or were too broad-scaled to drive real action at the local level. This gap fueled our (School of Climate Change and Sustainability at Azim Premji University) determination to lead an effort that, for the first time, provides district-level climate projections for every region in India. As the data is publicly available through a web portal, we are starting to engage with journalists, students, and citizens to communicate about this dataset and how this could be useful in thinking about local action. We have a long journey ahead, but we're beginning to understand that this work is more than just climate science — it's our ikigai, our true purpose.

The climate crisis is local, but our data wasn't India is a country of immense climatic diversity. From the snow-capped Himalayas to the drought-prone Deccan Plateau, from the floodplains of the Ganga to the cyclone-ravaged coasts of Odisha, no two districts experience climate change in the same way. Every monsoon season brings uncertainty in terms of floods in some states or droughts in others. Farmers struggle to make planting decisions, urban planners lack reliable data to develop long-term strategies for extreme weather. Without granular data, decision-making is like navigating a storm with a broken compass. By making district-level climate projections accessible, we are shifting from reactive disaster management to proactive resilience-building. A district in Maharashtra now has the same ability to plan for rising temperatures as a city in Europe. This is no longer about abstract climate policies; it is about empowering every Indian district with the knowledge to prepare for the future. This approach embodies the principles of climate data democracy to ensure that every community, regardless of its resources, has equal access to scientific insights that affect their future. Bridging the gap between Science and Policy

Science alone is insufficient unless it is effectively applied to benefit society, including the fight against climate change. If climate projection data is not effectively utilised, climate modeling efforts become meaningless and fail to benefit society. To facilitate this, we identify four levers of change i.e. the government and policymakers, the journalists and media houses, teachers and students, and the activists and the civil society organisations to collaborate with to make our science effective in benefitting society. Our advocacy is for the integration of climate projections into policymaking, fact-based reporting, teaching, and activism. The question now is no longer about the reality of climate change, but whether we have the resolve to act using the readily available climate projections before us.

The current gap between climate science and policy implementation is deeply concerning. There is a general agreement on the growing unpredictability of climate change and the increasing anomalies in monsoons and heatwaves. However proactive steps towards integrating the climate reality into policy remain severely lacking. A major reason for this disconnect may be because of the limited access to accurate climate data in a usable form. Processing complex climate data into easily usable form at a high level of granularity is difficult and hence there is a general hurdle for the policymakers to interpret the projections and apply them effectively. Without the right tools and insights, even the best climate projections fail to inform decision-making. Bridging this gap is essential to transforming scientific knowledge into actionable, impactful policies. This scenario made us firmly believe that climate data democratisation is essential for effective climate action for a resilient future. In a rapidly changing climate, planning is becoming increasingly challenging as officials contend with the growing unpredictability of climate change. Our thought is that if the local governments have seamless access to granular, district-level climate projections and if they get educated about how to use this information for planning, increasing challenges from climate-driven disasters such as heat stress, irregular rainfall patterns, extreme hydrological events such as flooding and droughts could proactively be addressed. With proper integration of this information, policies could be effective in addressing heat stress adaptation, integrating shifting rainfall patterns into agricultural policies, and designing infrastructure resilient to future climate shocks. Our ef-

fort is ensuring that the data is available, the real challenge now is turning it into a tool for action.

What is Ikigai?

Ikigai is a Japanese philosophy that describes the purpose of life at the intersection of what we like to do, what we are good at, what the world needs, and what sustains us in the long run. True ikigai lies at the center of these four elements, where passion, skill, impact, and sustainability overlap. For us, climate science represents that intersection. We are driven by the pursuit of knowledge, we have honed the expertise to analyze and interpret climate data, the world urgently needs this information, and slowly policymakers and institutions recognize its value. The road ahead is not smooth due to resistance to change, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of urgency often slowing down discussions around climate action. But we understand that true ikigai is not about ease; it is about conviction and we understand that there is still a long way to go. The roadblocks to climate action

Now that climate data is freely available and easy to access, will every district start using it right away? The answer is not so simple. A mix of low awareness, resistance to change, and slow policy action stands in the way. Climate change affects everything—agriculture, water, health, energy, and urban planning. But government departments often work in isolation, making it hard to use climate data in decision-making. For instance, urban planners rarely consult climate scientists, leading to infrastructure projects that ignore future risks. Many policymakers still see climate change as a distant problem, not an urgent one. As a result, short-term political and economic priorities overshadow long-term planning. Even when climate data is available, local officials may not know how to use it due to a lack of training. To overcome this, we need capacity-building programs that help officials turn climate data into action. Climate change is not just a topic for scientists and policymakers—it affects everyone. Making district-level climate data accessible to journalists, educators, and community leaders can help people understand the real impact and push for change.

How do we move forward?

The good news is that change is already underway. The School of Climate Change and Sustainability at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, has recently released district-level climate projection data for the first time in India openly through a web portal. This is the first step towards climate data democratisation in India which can help easier integration of climate intelligence into decision-making at all levels. One critical step is mandating climate risk assessments at the district level. Every district must conduct these assessments using localized projections, allowing state governments to incorporate climate adaptation into their annual budgets. Without such data-driven planning, adaptation efforts will remain reactive rather than proactive, leaving communities vulnerable to climate shocks. Alongside this, training government officials in climate science must become a priority. Just as financial literacy is essential for policymakers, so too is climate literacy. Workshops, training programs, and climate fellowships should be designed to equip officials with the ability to interpret and apply climate data effectively. When those in charge of policy and infrastructure planning understand climate risks, they can implement strategies that safeguard people and economies in the long run. Strengthening public-private partnerships is another crucial component of building climate resilience. The private sector—particularly insurance companies, real estate developers, and agribusinesses—has a vested interest in understanding climate risks, as these projections can help them de-risk investments and build long-term resilience. Governments should facilitate collaboration with these industries, encouraging investments in climate adaptation measures that benefit both businesses and communities. Additionally, making climate data more accessible to the public is essential. Open-access platforms should allow farmers, city planners, and local businesses to explore climate projections in a user-friendly format, enabling them to make informed decisions about land use, infrastructure, and resource management. Climate intelligence must become mainstream, embedded in governance, business strategy, and everyday life to ensure a sustainable and resilient future. Climate science is not meant to sit in research papers—it must reach the people who need it most. If India is to become truly climate-resilient, district-level projections must be woven into education, governance, business strategies, and everyday decision-making. This is not just about adapting to climate change; it is about securing India's future. My hope is that others—scientists, policymakers, and students — find their ikigai in this battle against climate change. The challenge before us is immense, but so is the opportunity to shape a future where data-driven climate action is the norm, not the exception. India's climate future is being written now. The question is: will we use the knowledge at our fingertips to shape it wisely?

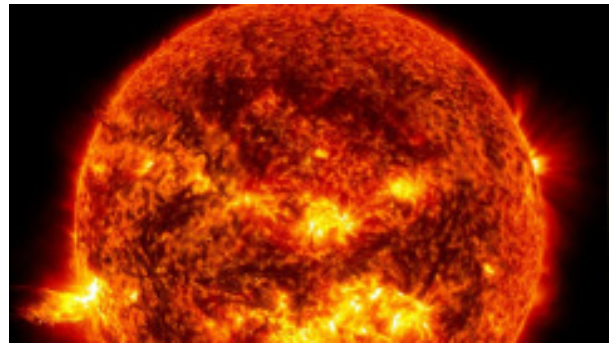
U.S. Federal Reserve sees tariffs raising inflation this year, keeps key rate unchanged

The Federal Reserve kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged Wednesday (March 19, 2025) and signaled that it still expects to cut rates twice this year even as it sees inflation staying stubbornly elevated. The Fed also now expects the economy to grow more slowly this year and next than it did three months ago, according to a set of quarterly economic projections also released. It forecasts growth falling to just 1.7% in 2025, down from 2.8% last year, and 1.8% in 2026. Policymakers also expect inflation will pick up slightly, to 2.7% by the end of this year from its current level of 2.5%. Both are above the central bank's 2% target. Even though the Fed maintained its forecast for two cuts, economists noted that under the surface there were signs that the central bank could stay on hold for some time. That is likely to keep borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans, and credit cards unchanged in the coming months. Eight of the 19 Fed officials said they see only one or zero rate reductions this year, up from just four in December. "It will be harder for them to cut rates this year with inflation moving sideways," said Michael Gapen, an economist at Morgan Stanley.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell, at a news conference, said that President Donald Trump's tariffs have started to push up inflation and would likely stall the progress the central bank has seen in reducing inflation since its peak in 2022. "I think we were getting closer and closer" to price stability, Powell said. "I wouldn't say we were at that... I do think with the arrival of the tariff inflation, further progress may be delayed." On his Truth Social platform late Wednesday, Trump posted: "The Fed would be MUCH better off CUTTING RATES as U.S. Tariffs start to transition (ease!) their way into the economy. Do the right thing." Powell added that the Fed still expects inflation to get back to nearly 2% by

the end of next year. Tariffs could just create a one-time increase in prices, he said, rather than an ongoing boost to inflation. And in some cases, the Fed can simply "look through" a temporary price rise, rather than respond by raising rates, Powell added. Those comments appeared to please investors, and the S&P 500 stock index rose 1% Wednesday afternoon. Luke Tilley, chief economist at Wilmington Trust, said Powell appeared less alarmed about the impact of tariffs compared to the Fed's previous meeting in January. "They're talking about tariffs in a totally different way," he said. Powell acknowledged that the Fed initially thought inflation coming out of the pandemic would be temporary, which led it to delay raising rates to combat higher prices. But he added that in this case, it could be a "different situation." "But... we really can't know that," he added, noting that uncertainty is enveloping the economy. "We're going to have to see how things actually work out." Fed policymakers also expect the unemployment rate to tick higher, to 4.4%, by the end of this year, from 4.1% now. The economic projections underscore the tight spot the Fed may find itself in this year: Higher inflation typically would lead the Fed to keep its key rate elevated, or even raise rates. On the other hand, slower growth and higher unemployment would often cause the Fed to cut rates to spur more borrowing and spending and lift the economy. It is the second meeting in a row that the Fed has kept its interest rate at about 4.3% as the central bank has moved to the sidelines as it evaluates the impact of the Trump administration's policies on the economy. Economists forecast that tariffs will likely push up inflation, at least temporarily. But other policies, such as deregulation, could lower costs and cool inflation. Powell acknowledged that many surveys of businesses and consumers have shown rising concern about the economic outlook.

It's clear now: iron inside the sun is more opaque than expected



The world is full of mysteries but not all of them are grand. Sure, we don't know what the mind really is or what the inside of a black hole looks like. But there are also many mysteries hiding in the little details. For example, we don't know why iron inside the sun is so opaque. Solid iron objects are everywhere around us. They're used to make doorknobs, cooking utensils, furniture, water tanks — all sorts of things. And they're all opaque. When light hits an iron object, it can't pass through. Instead, some of it is absorbed and some of it is scattered. How much light an object absorbs is called its opacity: the more it absorbs, the more opaque it is. Iron's opacity isn't an important detail when making a doorknob but when we're talking about the sun, the implications are practically cosmic.

The sun is the star closest to the earth and thus the one humans have studied the most. A lot of what we know, or think we know, about different kinds of stars comes from studying the sun. This is true on two levels. First: scientists have developed various theories to explain the sun's properties. Over many decades, they pointed telescopes, detectors, and antennae at emissions from the star to capture electromagnetic radiation, charged particles, heat, etc. and compare the data with each theory. Then they eliminated theories that disagreed with the data and refined those that did. On the second level, the sun is just one kind of star; the universe has many kinds. To understand their properties, scientists used the theories to build models that "simulate" them. These properties include the generation of heat and energy and their movement through the star, the star's magnetic field, its rotation and quakes on its surface, the evolution of the stellar atmosphere, the formation of sunspots and flares, and the effects of these changes on near-star space.

Stars are the universe's engines: we can't understand the universe if we don't understand how stars work. When stars form, they allow planets to form around them, which they subsequently supply with light, heat, and a protective magnetic shield. (Sometimes they supply too much or too little: scientists have found more than a few exoplanets fried by their host stars or turned into giant ice balls.) Their mass deflects asteroids and comets, and their flares energise nearby gas clouds and increase the formation of other stars. When a star dies, depending on its manner of death, it releases copious amounts of metals and other elements into the universe that aren't made in any other natural process. This variety of effects means stars' properties affect the formation of star clusters, galaxies, the universe's structure, and its evolution. Scientific models can thus simulate all these things if they get the stars' properties right, and herein lies the rub.

A series of independent studies until the mid-2010s reported that there appeared to be 30-50% less carbon, oxygen, and nitrogen in the sun than what models predicted. These models aren't easy to tweak with new data. They have been able to successfully predict some things, like the sun's current brightness and how many neutrinos nuclear fusion in the sun's core produces every second.

The models have also become so complicated they can run only on the most powerful supercomputers. When faced with the discrepancy, modellers suspected they were due to problems in the way the elements' abundances were measured. If the measurements are improved, the discrepancy might go away, they said. But a notable study published in 2015 disagreed: its authors wrote that the discrepancy "could be resolved if the true mean opacity for the solar interior matter were roughly 15% higher than predicted". How much energy an element absorbs inside the star affects the star's temperature profile. The authors were thus suggesting the models' data about the opacity of elements inside the sun were off. To buttress their argument, they subjected a plasma containing iron to conditions expected at the star's radiation/convection zone boundary, a layer about 30% of the way from the surface to its centre. They reported that depending on the frequency of radiation striking it, iron's opacity was found to be 30-400% higher than predicted. Subsequent studies upheld the crux of these findings: that models were underestimating iron's opacity. In a study published on January 27 this year, scientists reported "opacity profiles" of various elements derived from helioseismic inferences, i.e. based on the propagation of sound within the sun. They wrote: "We find that our seismic opacity is about 10% higher than theoretical values used in current solar models around 2 million degrees, but lower by 35% than some recent available theoretical values."

But researchers who banked on models — which were based on their theories — still had to be sure if uncertainties in the measurements of the time-varying properties of the plasma in these studies could explain the discrepancy. In a study published on March 3 in Physical Review Letters, researchers from the US and France reported they had put this question to the test and concluded the problem was indeed in the theory, not in the observed data. At Sandia National Laboratories in the US, the team exposed a thin sample of iron to X-rays and pointed spectrometers at the X-ray source. The spectrometers observed the X-ray shadow cast by the iron sample. The team also linked up the spectrometers to ultrafast X-ray cameras that recorded changes in temperature and particle density more than one billion times per second. The team wrote in its paper, "Our new measurements use a novel technology to measure opacity sample evolution ... These measurements quantify the impact of temporal gradients on published film-integrated data and contradict the hypothesis that the temporal evolution might explain the published model-data discrepancy."

The study's challenges weren't trivial. Measuring opacity in sun-like conditions requires technologies that didn't exist until recently. To mimic the conditions in the sun, the electrons in a plasma need to be energised to at least 180 eV while their density exceeds 30,000 billion billion particles per millilitre. The energy came from the X-ray source at Sandia. The thin iron sample also contained a small amount of magnesium as a tracer. The magnesium's interaction with the X-rays, as observed at the spectrometer, allowed the team to calculate the electrons' energy and density. The team inferred iron's opacity to the X-rays based on how strongly it absorbed the radiation. The more strongly it did, the darker the shadow it would cast in the spectrometer readings. This 'darkness' is called the line optical depth. The paper added, "The ultimate approach to resolving the model-data discrepancy entails measuring iron opacity as a function of time. However, that must satisfy many more requirements, including absolute transmission measurements, rather than line optical depth reported here, and formal uncertainty determination, while measuring plasma conditions." "Such an absolute opacity approach is presently under investigation," the team added.

A U-turn that has left a void in Ukraine's defence against Russia: Data



GNS News Agency, March 22

On February 24, for the first time, the U.S. voted against the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine war. This vote, along with its decision on March 4 to pause military aid, shows a marked shift in the U.S.'s policy towards Ukraine, which has depended heavily on it throughout the war for its military needs. Among the 176 member countries of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that participated in the draft resolution, Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, 93 voted in favour, while 65 countries, including India, abstained from voting. Only 18 countries voted against the resolution. The U.S. was joined by Russia, North Korea, and Belarus, countries with which it has never once agreed on Ukraine-related decisions. Its decision clashed with those of countries that had aligned with the U.S. in over 80% of the UNGA resolutions in the past, including Canada, Britain, Australia, and France.

The U.S.'s U-turn has implications for Ukraine, which is still trying to defend itself against Russian invasion. Ever since Russia's initial occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, over 40 countries have extended financial, humanitarian, and military aid to Ukraine. The U.S.'s total contribution of \$114 billion is the largest since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. It remains the leading donor in military, humanitarian, and financial aid to Ukraine in this period. European nations have together contributed \$132 billion. Chart 2 shows the top five countries that have donated military aid to Ukraine since 2022 (in %). The U.S. has donated \$64 billion, more than half of all the military aid

received by Ukraine during the war. The U.K. is at a distant second, having donated about 10% of the total amount.

In fact, backed mainly by the U.S., Ukraine became the largest importer of major arms in the world in the 2020-24 period, a nearly 100-fold rise compared with the figures of 2015-19. U.S. military aid has given Ukraine some vital arms and ammunition, especially missiles, which Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said "will do all the talking". Chart 3 shows the U.S.'s share in Ukraine's imports across various categories of weapons since the start of the war. The U.S. supplies over 70% of the aircraft used by Ukraine in the war and leads in providing weapons across most categories, including sensors (63%), missiles (55%), armoured vehicles (41%), and air defence systems (28%). However, it does not hold the largest share in artillery, which is primarily supplied by Poland, or in engines, where Germany accounts for about 40% of the supply. The arms supply data includes arms supplied and arms that countries have committed to supplying. U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement that the U.S. will be pausing military aid following his clash with Mr. Zelenskyy at the White House comes at a critical time. The outnumbered Ukrainian military forces and civilians continue to suffer casualties. Chart 4 shows the number of civilian fatalities and injuries in Ukraine per month since February 24, 2022. While the number of fatalities, which peaked in March 2022, has decreased since the beginning of the war, an average of about 172 civilians have been killed in Ukraine every month over the past year. A total of 12,605 civilians have been killed since February 2022.

Dignity above gold: Revisiting the KGF workers' strike of 1930



A mention of the year 1930 might remind most Indians of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Dandi March. But down south, in the princely state of Mysore, in the deep, dark and dangerous mines of Kolar Gold Fields (KGF), the flames of a very peculiar proletarian struggle were being kindled around the same time. It was a serendipitous discovery for historian Janaki Nair when she came across a report about the general strike of mine workers at KGF in The Hindu newspaper dated April 6, 1930, the same day Gandhiji broke the salt law. Nair, who has extensively researched and written about the general strike of 1930 at KGF, recently spoke at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) as part of a series of lectures on subaltern struggles in the princely state of Mysore. The 21-day long strike by an 18,000-strong workforce against a new system of fingerprint registration introduced by John Taylor & Sons has a special place in the list of labour movements given how the workers mobilised under no obvious leadership and succeeded at bringing the company to meet their demands.

The first news report on the strike appeared in The Hindu on April 4, 1930, under the headline "Kolar Gold Field — The Oorgaum Mine Strike." The events, however, started unfolding on April 1, 1930, says Nair, when an anonymous notice was found attached to a rock in KGF urging the mining workers to stop providing their fingerprints. The company's explanation for introducing the new registration was that it needed to register all workers and be able to identify them to fulfill obligations under the Workman's Compensation Act introduced in Mysore in the previous year in 1929. "The anonymous notices which sprang up in different parts of this 75 square mile area were asking workers to simply stop work from April 8 until the new registration system was withdrawn," Nair notes.

What was the workers' beef against the new registration system?

The winding engine operator at his platform, He controls from here the movements of the cages in their Journey up and down the mine. The discovery of the champion lode or the richest gold vein in KGF was in the late 1880s. The worker numbers rose from around 6,000 to a whopping 36,000 by 1907 and dropped to about 18,000 by 1930. The four mines of KGF constituted the largest enterprise in Mysore state.

Given the precious nature of the product and the large size of the workforce, John Taylor & Sons imposed very strict rules to govern the region. Nair refers to it as the "Company State." "In some ways, the company was the state in this particular region. The state government did not have much to say or do in terms of regulations that were operating in the KGF," she explains. Among the strictest rules put in place was the Mysore Mines Regulations, 1906, which, in Nair's words, developed a new taxonomy of crime itself. "All those who were in possession of any form of unwrought gold were punished. There had to be very strict system of licenses for traders and merchants in the area. There was a strict ban on a certain category of people called the 'undesirables.'" The working conditions were precarious and dangerous, to say the least. KGF mines were among the deepest in the world with Oorgaum mine going down to 8,000 feet or about 2.5 km. "In addition to the Mysore Mines Regulation of 1906, in 1916 Mysore Criminal Tribes Act came into being and was exclusively operating only in KGF," Nair points out. It identified five sets of tribes - Gantichors, Kepmaris, Woddars, Korachars and Koravas - as criminal tribes and placed them under forms of surveillance which were extremely pervasive and obnoxious, she adds.

While the company could not operate without the help of these tribes whose skills were very essential to mining, they used the Acts to keep a close eye on them. Nair explains this with the example of Woddars who were traditionally well-diggers and hence crucial for mining operations. "The Woddars, for instance, under the Criminal Tribes Act, were expected to be physically examined. Their orifices were examined from mouth to anus to vagina and they had to simply subject themselves to this kind of examination if they wanted to continue to labour in this region."

The working conditions were precarious and dangerous, to say the least. KGF mines were among the deepest in the world with Oorgaum mine going down to 8,000 feet or about 2.5 km. The deep hot mines witnessed a very high number of accidents. Often, the workers themselves were blamed for it by the company. "The heat question was some-

thing that the company was unwilling to deal with. Air conditioning was finally introduced in KGF only in the 1930s. The excuses that were given to not provide certain kinds of facilities was that natives are used to working in very high temperatures and therefore they can tolerate higher temperatures. The kinds of facilities that were offered to these workers were kept to the very bare minimum," Nair says.

There was also the distinction between the company and the contract coolies. While a portion of workers worked directly for the company, around 55% of them were provided by contractors making the lives and livelihoods of the latter further precarious. But what Nair finds interesting is how, even in such a repressive system, the workers found a new sense of meaning and self-worth. Most workers were migrants from the dry districts of Chingalhattu, Salem and North Arcot in Madras Presidency, where bonded labour was the norm. Money wages, therefore, became a form of liberation for the migrant workers of KGF. They earned a respectable wage between Rs 23 and 25 rupees a month which went up to Rs 50 for a mesthiri. A new sense of identity and dignity was taking shape among the workers and the fingerprint registration was a question mark posed on it.

The tipping point While the workers earned decent wages for the times, around 80% of them were heavily indebted to the Marwari moneylenders in the region, points out Nair. The moneylenders also managed to persuade the company to allow them to attach the salaries of the gravely indebted workers. "There was a complete complicity between the company and the moneylender... Sometimes the worker was indebted up to five or six times his monthly salary," Nair notes.

It was to such tense and strenuous circumstances that the fingerprint mandate was introduced. "Finger printing was also a way that was introduced to identify the criminal tribes. So, fingerprint was associated very strongly with ideas of criminality which in Mysore was applicable only to the KGF areas," says Nair. For the worker who was already doing a very dangerous labour, the notion of being considered a criminal on top of it or his identity verging on criminality must have been the tipping point. "There was full understanding of the dangers of work in this area. There was also full understanding of the kinds of restraints and surveillance measures that were being imposed on workers in this area," Nair says.

Having a central registry of workers also meant contract workers who used to work in multiple mines under different contractors would be prevented from doing so. "They felt there was no reason to be enslaved onto the mines. They had a very clear picture of what work meant and what it did not mean. And it did not mean committing yourself to this kind of bondage," Nair adds. By April 12, more demands such as grant of hospital and sick pay, service money to contract labourers, full strike pay, contract labour to be on same footing as company labour for attendance bonus, recognition of labour representatives and abolition of employment office in any form made it to the list. With the workers standing their ground and many of them beginning to leave for their native places, the company was not left with a choice. The nearly 7,000 fingerprints which it had collected were destroyed in the presence of a Mysore government bureaucrat and around 2,000 workers. "The workers came back to work about 21 days later, but not before the state government had taken grave notice of the difficulties that had set in KGF and had sent Diwan Mirza Ismail to look into it," Nair notes. By 1904 the Kolar fields produced nearly all the gold in India, valued at over 20 million pounds sterling annually. One of the most prominent features of the strike was the lack of any obvious leadership and the communication through anonymous notes. The strike also witnessed a unique kind of solidarity between the company workers and contract workers which wasn't witnessed prior to it.

"They were clear that the registry was a threat to all workers, not just to company or contract workers," Nair notes. She also observes that KGF was a location where new forms of self-definition were emerging as a consequence of political influences and economic liberty brought in by money wage. "There was no question of a return to certain forms of extra economic coercion, which they felt was implied in the collection of the fingerprints." According to Nair, it was an extraordinary occasion because there aren't many examples of workers striking for something other than conditions of work, wages and so on. "This strike was not about wages. Strictly speaking it wasn't even about working conditions. It was about dignity and self-worth which the workers were not willing to sacrifice in order to continue to work in these mines," says Nair who also makes a direct parallel with the current times. "We are constantly asked by the State to identify ourselves, provide what they call 'know your customer' documents over and over again. At the same time the state is becoming more and more inscrutable, and less transparent. So, this historical hostility to forms of identification are actually quite important and interesting to us as forms of resistance against this insistence on identification."

Judge orders Trump administration to return two transgender inmates to women's prisons

GNS News Agency, March 22

A judge on Wednesday (March 19, 2025) ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to transfer two transgender women inmates back to federal women's prisons after they had been sent to men's facilities in the wake of President Donald Trump's executive order that truncated transgender protections. U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth in Washington issued a preliminary injunction after the women were added as plaintiffs in ongoing litigation over the impact of Trump's executive order on transgender women in federal prisons. Mr. Lamberth ordered the federal Bureau of Prisons to "immediately transfer" the two women — identified in court papers by the pseudonyms Rachel and Ellen Doe — back to women's facilities and said the agency must continue to provide them with hormone therapy treatment for gender dysphoria. The women said in court papers that they were living in constant fear of sexual assault and other violence after being moved to male prisons. Male inmates reportedly propositioned them for sex and male officers subjected them strip searches without female officers present, they said. "The fact that they have already been transferred and, allegedly, have been abused at their new facilities can only strengthen their claims of irreparable harm," Mr. Lamberth wrote. The preliminary injunction is the latest in a series of rulings thwarting the agency's efforts to comply with the executive order, which calls for housing transgender women in men's prisons, and for halting gender-affirming medical care. Mr. Lamberth, who was appointed by Republican President Ronald Reagan, previously blocked the bureau from transferring a dozen other transgender women inmates to men's prisons. In a ruling last month, he order



that their "housing status and medical care" remain as they were prior Inauguration Day, when the president signed the executive order. Separately, in January, a federal judge in Boston halted the transfer of another transgender woman's to a men's prison. At the time, Rachel and Ellen Doe were not plaintiffs to any lawsuit challenging Trump's executive order and were not covered by Lamberth's initial rulings. In a court filing last month, a Trump administration official said that as of Feb. 20, there were 22 transgender women housed in federal women's facilities. That's about 1% of the nearly 2,200 transgender inmates the agency said it has in its custody. With Mr. Lamberth's order Wednesday, at least 15 people are now covered by orders blocking or reversing the moves. Mr. Lamberth has yet to rule in a lawsuit filed last week by three other inmates — a transgender woman housed in a men's prison and two transgender men housed in women's prisons.

It's a risk factor for strokes and heart disease, but atrial fibrillation continues to remain neglected in India: experts

Do you sometimes feel like your heart is beating so fast that it's going to jump out of your chest? This may last a few minutes, after which your heart rate returns to normal. If this happens often, it could mean that you may have Atrial Fibrillation or Afib, a condition where faulty electrical impulses in the heart make its upper chambers or atria, beat too fast or "quiver", out of sync with the lower chambers (ventricles).

Atrial Fibrillation (Afib) is the commonest cardiac arrhythmia and affects millions of people across the globe, but continues to remain one of the most neglected and underrated of public health problems, despite it being an enhanced risk factor for stroke and other cardiovascular events. Anyone can develop Afib. Advanced age being an important risk factor, the burden of this condition is set to dramatically increase in the Indian population. Afib can present with symptoms such as palpitations, dyspnea (shortness of breath), chest pain, fatigue and intolerance to exertion. But in approximately 10% to 40% of people, Afib can be asymptomatic, with most remaining undiagnosed until an incidental diagnosis is given during a hospital visit or in the event of an acute stroke. The abnormal rhythm that Afib causes, stops the heart from pumping as well as it should, disrupting blood flow and allowing it to pool. This increases the risk of clot formation, which is dangerous, because, these clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Untreated Afib can also contribute to heart failure by impairing the heart's ability to pump blood efficiently. Afib is also associated with significantly increased risk of myocardial infarction, dementia, chronic kidney disease and mortality.

Like many heart conditions, Afib is a progressive disease. People at higher risk of developing Afib include those at an advanced age, those who have high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, sleep apnoea, hyperthyroidism, and a family history of Afib, as well as those who smoke or consume excessive alcohol. With proper diagnosis and management, including medications to prevent clotting (anticoagulants) and control heart rhythm, most people with Afib can live normal lives. However identifying the condition itself remains the biggest barrier to its management. The prevalence of Afib in Southeast Asia is increasing faster than it is globally. Also, there are differences in characteristics and outcomes between Asian and non-Asian patients with Afib: the mortality rate remains high,

and major bleeding rates remain a significant concern among Asian Afib patients, note researchers in 'The burden of atrial fibrillation and unmet needs of its management in South-east Asia and South Asia', a comment published in the March 2025 issue of The Lancet Regional-Southeast Asia.

This underscores the need to improve management strategies for patients in Southeast Asia. It also points to the urgent need to implement strategies to improve the standard of care in rural regions. "Untreated Afib doubles the risk of cardiac deaths and is associated with a heightened risk for stroke. Yet, most people, including some physicians, are unaware that Afib is a serious condition. The detection of Afib in itself is thus our biggest challenge," says C.G. Bahuleyan, professor of cardiology, Cardiovascular Centre, Ananthapuri Hospitals and Research Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, one of the co-authors of The Lancet article. The magnitude of Afib is expected to be significant, especially in Kerala where the proportion of the elderly is high, alongside increased longevity, a higher prevalence of cardiovascular risk factors and comorbid conditions. Dr. Bahuleyan, who was one of the lead investigators behind the Kerala AF registry (2016-2021), the largest study on AF patients from India to date, says that the treatment and care offered to these patients is generally perceived to be sub-optimal, especially with regard to stroke prevention strategy. What the Kerala AF study revealed. The Kerala AF registry, instituted under Cardiologists Society of India, Kerala Chapter (CSI-K), was initiated to collect systematic hospital-based data on clinical characteristics, risk factors, treatment patterns and outcomes of AF patients. A total of 3,421 patients were recruited from 53 hospitals across Kerala from April 2016 to April 2017. Of these, 51% were women. The median age of the cohort was 65 years. Hypertension, diabetes mellitus and dyslipidaemia were present in 53.8%, 34.5% and 42.2% patients, respectively. Chronic kidney disease was observed in 46.6%, coronary artery disease in 34.8% and heart failure (HF) in 26.5% of the patients. The one-year clinical outcome of patients with non-valvular Afib from the Kerala AF Registry reported that despite the high risk profile of patients in this registry, the use of oral anticoagulants (OAC) was suboptimal at 38.6%, whereas antiplatelets were used in nearly half of patients. One-year all-cause mortality was 16.48 and hospitalization 20.65 per 100 person years, which is relatively high. The Kerala registry findings are not indicative of the pattern in the rest

of the country because of the wide socio-economic disparities between States. However, the barriers to the comprehensive and guideline-based management of Afib are the same across India, say experts.

Lack of comprehensive, guideline-based treatment. The use of new oral anticoagulants (NOACs) or Non-vitamin K Antagonist Oral Anticoagulants has drastically changed the treatment of Afib in patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation, as it offers a safe, convenient alternative compared to traditional vitamin K antagonists (VKAs) like warfarin, which pose some bleeding complications. Although NOAC is the preferred drug for stroke prevention in Afib as per guideline recommendations, the cost considerations and wide difference in prescription practices among physicians perhaps contribute to their lower use, say doctors.

"Given that almost all of our patients have non valvular Afib, physician inertia [in using NOACs] is one reason why the management of Afib remains suboptimal. A one-year clinical follow-up of Kerala AF Registry patients showed that just 7.1% were receiving NOACs. The price of NOACs could be one inhibiting factor but now that generic drugs are available, the cost-effectiveness of the therapy should not be in question," Dr. Bahuleyan says. Deepak Padmanabhan, senior consultant, cardiac electrophysiology at Narayana Health, Bangalore concurs that there is great variance in the manner in which Afib is managed, partly because of the lack of proper protocols and the shortage of skilled specialists or electrophysiologists to manage the condition. "The new guidelines in 2023 by the American College of Cardiology, and in 2024 by the European Society of Cardiology, which point to the importance of maintaining a normal heart rhythm in preventing death and heart failure, are now making physicians, as well as people sit up and take note that Afib is a serious condition and that it has to be managed well," Dr. Padmanabhan says. People with persistent Afib may need surgical procedures to restore their normal heart rhythm. Small implantable devices like Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators (ICDs) and pacemakers aside, selected patients who do not respond well to medical therapy are offered radiofrequency ablation or cardiac catheter ablation treatment. These treatments are expensive, performed only in select centres in the country, and hence inaccessible to most.



The need to enhance awareness and patient education of Afib, its symptoms, risk factors, the need to modify lifestyle factors to prevent the onset of Afib and the significance of seeking timely medical attention is acute, says Dr. Bahuleyan. "If untreated, Afib increases mortality risk in the elderly. It affects one's physical well being, cognitive potential, worsens existing comorbidities and even makes the body less responsive to standard drugs for these conditions," he adds. K.K. Narayanan Nambodiri, professor of cardiology and head of cardiac electrophysiology division, SCTIMST points out that while an Afib diagnosis is difficult without a clinical evaluation or an ECG, smart watches with built-in ECG capability -- like the Apple watch -- can pick up Afib. It has been reported that in May 2024, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) qualified Apple's Atrial Fibrillation (AFib) History Feature as a Medical Device Development Tool (MDDT).

This qualification allows the feature to be used as a non-invasive method to assess Afib burden estimates within clinical studies. This is the first time a digital health technology has been qualified under the FDA's MDDT program for such purposes. Other brands have followed suit. This is being seen as a new and convenient way to broadly screen for Afib and to monitor the condition long-term. Professional bodies of cardiologists recommend a comprehensive care approach based on the 'Atrial Fibrillation Better Care' (ABC) pathway as a strategy to manage atrial fibrillation (Afib) that focuses on three key areas: Avoiding stroke (with anticoagulation), Better symptom management (through patient-centered rate or rhythm control), and Cardiovascular risk factor and comorbidity optimisation.

What did Tamil Nadu's budget have for the health sector?

Compared to 2024-2025, Tamil Nadu allotted a little more for the health sector in its budget for 2025-2026, maintaining its focus on non-communicable diseases (NCD), particularly cancer. The allocation for health rose by 8.4% - from ₹20,197.40 crore to ₹21,906 crore. While a few announcements are welcome, experts say the budget falls short of addressing some of the crucial issues in the State's health sector. Similar to last year, cancer prevention and management remains one of the priority areas for the State government. One of the main announcements is the provision of HPV vaccination to all girls aged 14 years to prevent cervical cancer. An amount of ₹36 crore was allocated for 2025-2026. Another announcement was to take screening for major cancers and heart diseases to women closer to their homes, through mobile medical teams in collaboration with NGOs for which ₹40 crore was allotted. To introduce early cancer detection using advanced diagnostic methods, the government plans to enhance medical equipment and manpower in secondary care facilities and medical college hospitals at a cost of ₹110 crore over the next three years.

The Government Arignar Anna Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Institute, Karapettai, Kancheepuram district, which was designated as a State-level nodal cancer centre, is set to be upgraded and function as an autonomous facility with 800 beds, offering cancer diagnosis, treatment, palliative care and other services. A sum of ₹120 crore will be provided for the next two years.

Among other announcements, ₹1,092 crore was allocated to the Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme, 1,461 crore for the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CMCHIS) and ₹348 crore for ambulance services. The National Health Mission has been allocated 2,754 crore. Cervical cancer vaccine decision welcomed.

A number of doctors and health activists welcomed the decision of the State government to provide HPV vaccination for girls. Malliga J.S., head of preventive oncology at Cancer Institute (WIA), Adyar, said for a State government to focus on the prevention of cervical cancer and roll out the HPV vaccination was landmark. "This is the right step forward. We hope that all eligible girls are covered with vaccination and this becomes a sustainable programme covering new cohorts," she said. Noting that screening is equally important for the prevention of cervical cancer, she said she also hoped that HPV DNA testing would be rolled out in the future. Cervical cancer, she said, was the second commonest cancer in women in the State, and it still was the top cancer in a few districts.

Priya Kapoor, consultant, surgical oncology, Apollo Proton Cancer Centre, Taramani, noted that the allotment of funds for early cancer detection and screening were important steps as early detection was crucial for treatment of cancer. "The cost of treatment for a person diagnosed with stage I breast cancer is around ₹4 lakh, while it is around ₹15 - 20 lakh for a person with stage III cancer. Doing a screening mammogram every year costs ₹1,500. So, screening and early detection makes it cost-effective; the benefits are immense. The government allocating funds for this purpose is the way ahead," she said. "When compared to the West, we have higher mortality due to cancer. Patients present in advanced stages because of the lack of screening. In the United States, 75% of patients with breast cancer are in stages I and II, while in India, 75% of patients are in stage III. This also impacts the treatment success rates. The West has screening protocols in place for breast cancers and colon cancers. As a result, the disease is picked up in the precancerous stage or stage I. In our country, it is mostly in stages III and IV. When we spend a little on screening, we can save a lot on treatment," she said. She also pointed out that cervical cancer can be prevented by vaccination. HPV vaccination has 99% efficacy. It can prevent not only cervical cancer but also cancers affecting the vagina, vulva and penile, she said. No impetus to primary health care. Some experts however felt that the budget was silent about a number of other pressing needs of the Health Department and hoped these would be addressed in the upcoming demands for grants for the department.

T. Sundararaman, former executive director, National Health Systems Resource Centre, who also chaired the



advisory committee on CMCHIS, said there was hardly any significant announcement for the State's health sector in the budget. "There is a great need to strengthen primary health care in Tamil Nadu. The role of primary health care in non-communicable disease management is only at the beginning stage in the State, and 'Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam' is an ad hoc, stop-gap programme that focuses only on two to three diseases. There are no significant announcements to strengthen primary healthcare services," he said. He added that preventable mortality due to NCDs was very high in Tamil Nadu. Prof. Sundararaman noted that similarly, there was no significant effort to improve CMCHIS. "Diagnostics is very weak in Tamil Nadu and the public health workforce is far short of requirements," he added. G. R. Ravindranath, general secretary, Doctors Association for Social Equality, said, "The DMK, before coming to power, had announced that spending on health would be increased by three times but this is yet to be achieved."

With the government allocating ₹1,461 crore for the CMCHIS, he said that the scheme did not benefit the public but only private hospitals. "The State government should reconsider the scheme. It should gradually reduce the fund allocated for health insurance and utilise it to improve government health infrastructure directly," he said. He pointed out that there was no mention of a salary hike for government doctors; a long pending demand to grant pay band-4 at 12 years of service. "There is nothing on recruitment of doctors and nurses as per the patient load. Now, medical and paramedical personnel are being recruited on a contractual basis. This is anti-labour, and the government should change its policy," he added. "Lack of investment in human resources" P. Saminathan, State president, Service Doctors and Post Graduates Association, said investment in human resources is lacking. "There has been an increase in the number of medical colleges/health institutions but comparatively, there has been no increase in human resources. The State government should increase the posts of doctors, staff nurses and paramedical personnel," he said. He added that super specialist departments should be established in newer medical college hospitals.

Olive Hospitals launches annual recipe and diet plan book

Hyderabad: City-based Olive Hospitals on Tuesday announced the launch of the 5th edition of its annual recipe, comprehensive diet plan book titled 'Wholesome Recipes for A Vibrant Life', specially curated by a team of expert dietitians, a press release said.

The 2025 edition of the diet plan book has an assortment of more than 60 recipes, professionally designed by nutritionists and dietitians. The recipes have been curated keeping in mind the dietary habits of Indians, including items from the Indian main courses in the form of rice meals, whole grain foods, pulses, and wheat-based foods.

Each recipe has been prepared in a way that provides necessary nutrients, aids digestion, enhances immunity, and helps to maintain constant energy levels. Sugra Fathima, head, clinical nutrition and dietetics, Olive Hospitals, said. Every recipe in the book has complete nutritional details so that individuals can make better decisions regarding their diet. Dietary recommendations are also given at the end of every recipe so that it is suitable for people with certain health issues.

All you need to know about: anaemia

Over the past couple of years, there have been questions and counter-questions when it comes to anaemia in India. Is it being over-diagnosed? Are the cut-offs that are being tested for not accurate for India? Is it purely driven by a deficiency of iron, or are there other factors at play? This month, as we explore a range of women's health issues, here is all you need to know about anaemia, a condition that primarily affects women and children, and one that remains a public health challenge in India.

What is anaemia and whom does it affect?

Anaemia is a condition where the body has red blood cells that are lower than normal levels, or when the haemoglobin within these cells is lower than it should be. Haemoglobin is an iron-containing protein that carries oxygen from the lungs to all of the body's tissues. This means that if there are not enough red blood cells or not enough haemoglobin in them, there is a decreased supply of oxygen to the body. Anaemia is a very common blood disorder. The World Health Organization classifies it as a major public health concern, and estimates that 40% of all children aged 6-59 months, 37% of pregnant women and 30% of women 15-49 years of age are affected by anaemia. It also states that anaemia mainly affects young children, pregnant and postpartum women, and menstruating adolescent girls and women. Low- and lower-middle income countries bear the greatest burden of anaemia, particularly populations living in rural settings, in poorer households.

What are the causes and symptoms of anaemia?

There are many different types of anaemia. Some of them are inherited (such as sickle cell anaemia), some are caused by nutritional deficiencies (such as iron deficiency anaemia, Vitamin B12 deficiency anaemia and pernicious anaemia), some are caused by abnormal red blood cells (such as aplastic anaemia) and some are caused due to having a chronic disease or an infection. Iron deficiency anaemia is considered to be the most common type of anaemia. This occurs primarily due to inadequate intake of iron in the diet. Vitamin-deficiency anaemia can occur due to low levels of vitamin B12 or folate (folic acid), also usually due to poor intake in the diet. Pernicious anaemia is a condition in which Vitamin B12 cannot be absorbed by the body. Tiredness, fatigue and weakness are common symptoms of anaemia. Other symptoms include dizziness or lightheadedness, chest pain, pale or yellow skin, headaches, cold hands and feet and heart palpitations.

How is anaemia diagnosed?

Anaemia is diagnosed on the basis of blood haemoglobin concentration. There are specified thresholds for this, based on age, sex and physiological status. In India, as per National Family Health Survey data, anaemia has been on the rise: from 53% of women in the age group 15-49 and 58.6% of children between six months and 59 months being found anaemic during NFHS-4 (2015-16), the number spiked to 57% of women and 67% of children in these age groups during NFHS-5 (2019-21). However in the latest NFHS-6 (which started in July 2023), questions related to anaemia were dropped, after experts pointed out that the WHO cut-offs for anaemia may not be suitable for India, and that the methods used to estimate anaemia could be flawed, leading to an overestimation of cases. The WHO defines anaemia in children aged under five years and pregnant women as a haemoglobin concentration <110 g/L at sea level, and anaemia in non-pregnant women as a haemoglobin concentration <120 g/L. These cut-offs may not be suitable to the Indian population, according to experts. They also pointed to the way blood is drawn for sampling: the NFHS survey measures haemoglobin in a drop of capillary blood that oozes from a finger prick; the WHO recommends that venous blood be used to estimate anaemia.

What is the situation with regard to anaemia in India?

Anaemia continues to remain a cause of concern in India. The Union Health Ministry has said the assessment of anaemia in India is being shifted to the Diet and Biomarkers Survey in India (DABS-I), launched in 2022, to map diet, nutrition and health status. A study that was published in January this year in the European Journal of Clinical Nutrition and funded by the Department of Biotechnology, measured venous blood haemoglobin (Hb) concentrations from about 4,500 people in eight States. Overall, the study found, 34.9% of those tested were anaemic. However, only 9% of them had what could be medically characterised as iron-deficiency anaemia; 22% of them were characterised as having anaemia from 'unknown' causes,



signifying the need, one of the authors of the study previously told The Hindu, for a more nuanced policy intervention to address anaemia. Concentrating on single interventions, such as iron tablets or folate acid on their own, was inadequate, and the key remained, to diversify diets, with more fruits, milk and vegetables made available to a wider population, which would improve absorption of essential nutrients, the researcher had said.

What are the consequences of anaemia?

Anaemia, the WHO says, can affect school performance (through developmental delays and behavioural disturbances such as decreased motor activity, social interaction and attention to tasks), productivity in adult life and overall quality of life in general. During pregnancy, anaemia has been associated with poor maternal and birth outcomes, including premature birth, low birth weight and maternal mortality. In addition to the health consequences, anaemia can have important financial impacts for individuals, families, communities and countries.

How do you prevent and treat anaemia?

Treatment for anaemia depends on what is causing it. Dietary changes and dietary supplements may be recommended. These may include iron supplements, folic acid supplements and vitamin B12 supplements. Other kinds of medication may also be prescribed. If there is an underlying cause, then it has to be treated in order to treat the anaemia. A healthy well-balanced diet can help prevent iron and vitamin-deficiency anaemia. Getting vaccinated, practicing good hygiene and managing chronic diseases properly, can also help. If you believe you have anaemia or are at risk for, it is essential to talk to your healthcare provider.

Going to buy a pre-owned vehicle? Then, don't make these mistakes

Hyderabad: It can be a smart money-saving move to buy a used vehicle instead of a new one as the average price gap between new and used vehicles is more. But many used-vehicle shoppers make costly mistakes that can be avoided with a little research and preparation. Here are the common mistakes identified by experts and what you can do to avoid them. Not taking a thorough test drive: Many shoppers will drive the vehicle but not pay close enough attention to how the vehicle drives. An in-depth test drive can help you determine if there's anything mechanically wrong with the vehicle. Is there any hesitation from the engine? Are there any clunks as you drive over bumps? These are all things that, if noticed, can help you avoid a used car with a dubious past.

Most new used vehicles are also equipped with technology features. Make sure the touchscreen works properly and that you can pair your phone to the vehicle. Also determine what kind of driver aids the vehicle has and observe if they work properly. Features such as blind-spot warning and traffic-adaptive cruise control rely on sensors that can be costly to fix if they're not working properly. Not getting a history report: Never assume the seller knows the vehicle's history or is being entirely truthful. A used car might look good on the surface and drive well, but it could be hiding a history of accidents, flood damage or odometer fraud. A vehicle history report can also reveal prior accidents, title issues, rental or fleet vehicle use, and any major recalls or repairs. A car might have been written off as a total loss but later rebuilt and resold — something a history report can flag.

Air India, Air New Zealand want to launch direct flights between the two countries by 2028-end



about the opportunity to enhance connectivity for travellers between our two countries. This codeshare agreement is an important first step, offering more options for customers while we work to understand what a direct service could look like. Today's event underscores the significance of the India market to New Zealand, not only for tourism but also for strengthening business and education ties. We are committed to working collaboratively to grow the travel market over the coming years, ensuring a strong foundation for a successful direct service by 2028," Air New Zealand Chief Executive Greg Foran said.

Air India's Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson, a New Zealander himself, said that the codeshare between the two airlines will help them develop traffic on India-New Zealand routes, which might help them "viably operate" a non-stop service between the two countries which the two airlines have "committed to explore together with the respective authorities".

As part of Air India's ongoing transformation, the Tata group airline has been expanding its global network using its own growing aircraft fleet as well as through new or expanded codeshare agreements with other airlines, mainly those in the Star Alliance. The MoU with Air New Zealand follows the expansion of Air India's codeshare partnerships with Lufthansa group, Singapore Airlines, and All Nippon Airways.

"The MoU also outlines Tourism New Zealand's commitment to growing inbound tourism from the Indian market. Tourism New Zealand's research shows that 18 million people in New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai are actively considering traveling to New Zealand, making it a key emerging market. More than 80,000 international travellers arrived from India last year, 23% more than in 2019," the airlines said in their joint release.



an estimated 10 per cent increase in steel demand in 2025 contradicts claims that the industry is in distress and requires protectionist measures. "The proposed safeguard duty would raise steel prices, adversely affecting downstream industries such as automotive, infrastructure, and renewable energy. Specialised steel requirements remain unmet domestically due to technological and quality limitations, making imports essential," he said. "Petitioners such as ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India are major importers of the same products they claim are harming the domestic market, undermining their arguments for safeguard duties. ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AMNS) and AMKL, key members of the Domestic Industry, have withdrawn support, weakening the legal standing of the petition," he added. Responding to the 12 per cent duty recommendation, Engineering Export Promotion Council of India (EEPC India) Chairman, Pankaj Chadha, stressed that there is a need for additional measures to protect MSMEs and user industries from potential price hikes and supply disruptions. "There should be a provision for MSME units to procure steel at export parity prices to ensure their global competitiveness. Like the EU model, country-specific quotas should also be considered to avoid overdependence on any single source," Chadha said. Highlighting concerns over domestic price escalation, Chadha said that using the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) price as a benchmark to maintain price stability could help prevent steep hikes, ensuring an affordable raw material supply for engineering and manufacturing sectors.

growth rate of 6.7 per cent for the next financial year 2025-26. Setty said the economic data indicates private consumption in the current quarter has picked up. The Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) has reached 7.6 per cent, which means that the consumption is coming back. "There are certain sectors which are slightly slower than others, such as the auto segment. The auto sector witnessed very good growth in October-November, but December onwards it has slowed down. But overall, private consumption seems to be moving in a positive direction," he said. Referring to private sector investment, the SBI Chairman said companies seem to be worried about external factors. "...how tariffs are going to work out or if a particular country is not able to export, then whether the dumping will happen here.

But I think these are all concerns which we feel that can be overcome," Setty said. Once consumption picks up, private capital expenditure will happen in the sector which is not witnessing (private capex). "Otherwise, if you see our (SBI's) pipeline of corporate lending is about Rs 4 lakh crore...half of it is sanctioned but yet to be disbursed and half of it is under discussion. This is a significant pipeline and the sectors also are diversified other than the core sector," the SBI Chairman said. On tariff wars, Setty said the broader assessment is that the export basket of India is diversified, both in terms of products and also in terms of geographies. "While every export matters, and even if you are exporting \$10 billion or \$20 billion to the US, the impact will be there, but it will not be as significant in our view.

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

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal 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 deals. 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," Barthwal 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. Barthwal 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. Barthwal 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 collaboration," he added.

Focus on improving crowd management under station redevelopment scheme: House Panel to Railways

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways has recommended that a special focus should be given on improving the crowd management under the government's Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. The Committee's observation came at a time when, on February 15, 18 people were killed at New Delhi Railway Station in a stampede. The passengers were trying to board Prayagraj-bound trains for the Maha Kumbh. The House panel also took note of the slow progress of works under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme and said that a dedicated task force should be established to oversee project timelines. "The Committee further recommend that the redevelopment of stations under the scheme focus on improving crowd management to prevent any untoward incidents. This should include the provision of multiple and adequately spacious entry/exit points, well-positioned security checkpoints, proper lighting, and clear signage," said the Standing Committee on Railways in its report on Demands for Grants (2025-26) of the Ministry of Railways, which was presented in the Lok Sabha on March 10.

The Committee also directed the Railways to ensure sufficient deployment of personnel to maintain smooth and efficient passenger movement, so that both safety and convenience can be enhanced. According to the report, against the target of revamping 453 stations during 2024-25, only one station could be upgraded till December 2024. "...the Committee desires the Ministry to establish a dedicated task force to oversee project timelines, ensuring regular communication between contractors, local authorities and railway officials to address potential bottlenecks promptly. The Committee also desires the railways to engage with local representatives and concerned State Government early in the planning process to secure necessary clearances and foster a collaborative environment, reducing bureaucratic delays." Launched on December 23, 2022, the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme envisages to develop a station as a "city centre", which will have modern facade, regulated traffic movement, well-lit, aesthetically pleasing grand porches, landscaping, and representation of local art and culture, signages and roof plazas.

According to the Ministry of Railways, a total of 1,337 stations have been identified under the scheme so far and



work is in progress at 1,202 stations. The total cost of the project is around Rs 1 lakh crore. However, the Ministry said that there is no specific timeframe for the scheme as the redevelopment of railway stations is complex, which involves passenger and train safety and requires various statutory clearances from urban/local bodies. According to data from the ministry, around Rs 8,000 crore was spent under the head of "customer amenities" — a category under which the scheme comes — for 2023-24. The expected expenditure target for the current financial year 2024-25 is Rs 12,992 crore. While most of the project under the scheme is being taken up under Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) mode — a model under which a contractor handles a project from start to finish, the Ministry of Railways said that Rani Kamalapati station (commissioned November 15, 2021) in the state of Madhya Pradesh has been developed under Public Private Partnership (PPP) Model and 15 railway stations are also being explored for development on PPP Mode. The Committee urged the Ministry to evaluate the success of stations developed under the PPP model, like the Rani Kamalapati station, to identify best practices and potential scalability of the same to other stations while attracting private investment and expertise. Of the 1,337 identified stations under the scheme, Uttar Pradesh has the most (157). This is followed by Maharashtra (132), West Bengal (101), Bihar (98), Gujarat (87), Rajasthan (85), Madhya Pradesh (80), Tamil Nadu (77), Andhra Pradesh (73), Karnataka (61), Odisha (59), Jharkhand (57) and Assam (50).

Trade ministry arm pushes for 12% duty on steel imports citing 'trade diversion'

Amid fears of a surge in steel imports into India—driven by trade diversion following US President Donald Trump's sweeping 25 per cent tariffs and the European Union's protectionist measures on steel—the anti-dumping watchdog under the Commerce and Industry Ministry has proposed a 12 per cent duty on certain imported steel products.

The recommendation to the Finance Ministry comes amid a tussle between steel producers and downstream industries. While steel manufacturers have been pushing for protection against cheaper imports, MSME manufacturers warn that the duty could drive up steel prices and strengthen monopolisation in the sector. The anti-dumping body, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), which falls under the Commerce Ministry, reasoned that as many as 129 trade remedy measures have been adopted by countries such as the EU, Canada, the UK and others against steel products, leaving India vulnerable to injury. However, former trade officer and head of think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), Ajay Srivastava, said that the safeguard measure could encourage monopolistic practices, as sole domestic suppliers may restrict consumer choices and inflate prices.

Trump's tariffs a trigger "The authority also notes that on February 10, 2025, the US announced that it would apply a 25 per cent additional duty on steel products with effect from March 12, 2025, uniformly on all imports into the US from all sources, by revoking relaxations and exemptions granted, if any, to various countries. The domestic industry has claimed that, as a result of these measures, more imports are expected to be diverted from those countries, making India more vulnerable to increased imports," DGTR said in its report dated Tuesday. The DGTR said that large steel-producing economies such as Japan, South Korea and China have steel-producing capacities that far exceed their domestic consumption. It warned that, due to this excess capacity, steel producers in these economies may turn to export markets, which could pose a serious threat to the domestic industry.

'Safeguard duty to encourage monopolistic practices' On the investigation, Srivastava said that despite claims of industry distress, domestic steel production grew by 19 per cent between FY 2021-2024, with capacity utilisation rates between 83 and 90 per cent. He added that

India needs to grow 8% for progress, core sector must invest: SBI chairman

State Bank of India, Challa Sreenivasulu Setty, SBI chief, private capital expenditure, capital expenditure, capex, Indian express news, current affairs Challa Sreenivasulu Setty, Chairman, State Bank of India. (Photo: Ganesh Shirshakar) INDIA definitely needs to grow at 8 per cent to progress, and this needs consumption and private capital expenditure, said Challa Sreenivasulu Setty, Chairman, State Bank of India, the largest bank in the country with a deposit base of Rs 52.29 lakh crore. "India definitely requires a growth rate of 8 per cent to progress, but this (current) growth rate (of around 6 per cent) is not to be really worried about... We must realise that the slowdown which we are talking about could be a blip. The long-term story of India is intact," Setty told The Indian Express in an interview. According to him, while private capital expenditure is happening in certain sectors, the core sectors, such as steel and cement, must start to invest. "They all have reached the capacity utilisation of 75-76 per cent," he said.

Setty, who took charge as SBI Chairman in August 2024, is of the view 8 per cent growth needs consumption to pick pace. "Rural consumption is alright, but we may have to see the trend post rabi harvesting. But broadly some of the indicators are better. In terms of urban consumption, the expectations of consumption have been created. Now, the Budget proposed there will be no tax on annual income up to Rs 12 lakh," he said. The Indian economy grew 6.2 per cent during the quarter-ended December 2024 and is estimated to grow 6.5 per cent for the full year 2024-25. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected a GDP

Growth to sustain momentum driven by robust domestic demand: RBI report

The Indian economy continues to demonstrate resilience as evident in the robust performance of the agriculture sector and improving consumption amidst challenges posed by rising trade tensions, a Reserve Bank of India study said. "Domestically, macroeconomic fundamentals remain strong, and economic growth is poised to sustain momentum driven by robust domestic demand, steady investment activity, and ongoing policy-driven infrastructure development along with a pick-up in government spending," the RBI's 'State of the economy' report said.

Going forward, India's structural strengths—sound fiscal policies, a well-calibrated monetary framework, and digital transformation initiatives—are expected to provide a strong foundation for long-term sustainable economic growth, the report said. The RBI, which cut the Repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent in the February policy review, has projected a growth rate of 6.7 per cent in 2025-26. The reverberations of a tumultuous external environment, however, are being reflected in sustained foreign portfolio outflows, it said. India's macroeconomic strength to face these challenges is bolstered by a decline in headline CPI inflation to a seven-month low of 3.6 per cent in February 2025 on account of a further correction in food prices, the study said. "The resilience of the global economy is being tested by escalating trade tensions and a heightened wave of uncertainty around the scope, timing, and intensity of tariffs. While engendering heightened volatility in global financial markets, these have also caused apprehensions about the slowdown in global growth," the RBI study said.

The report said policymakers are now walking a tight-rope, having to balance the upward strain of rising prices on account of tariffs and currency depreciation, as well as the downward pressure on inflation from economic slowdown, the report said. While facing challenges from weakening global trade and tariff uncertainty, India's external sector continues to find support from resilient services exports, which remain less affected by global disruptions, it said.

The immediate course of the global economy is likely to be shaped by escalating trade tensions, inflationary pressures stemming from tariffs, and attendant financial market volatility, the report said. The RBI report said the global economy, which entered 2025 on a strong note of resilience, is caught in a storm of escalating trade tensions and a heightened wave of uncertainty around the scope, timing, and in-



INDIA definitely needs to grow at 8 per cent to progress, and this needs consumption and private capital expenditure, said Challa Sreenivasulu Setty, Chairman, State Bank of India, the largest bank in the country with a deposit base of Rs 52.29 lakh crore.

tensity of tariffs. "What is more certain, however, is that trade wars and escalating tariffs could have a deleterious impact on growth and fuel inflation, not just in the countries directly involved but for the global economy as a whole. Estimates suggest that a full-blown tariff war could raise the price level by 1.0-1.2 per cent in the US, reduce real GDP growth by 0.6 percentage points in 2025, and leave the U.S. economy persistently 0.3-0.4 per cent smaller in the long run," it said. The report said the resilience of the global economy is being tested by escalating trade tensions and a heightened wave of uncertainty around the scope, timing, and intensity of tariffs. While engendering heightened volatility in global financial markets, these have also caused apprehensions about the slowdown in global growth.

Robust kharif production, better rabi sowing coupled with higher reservoir levels and seasonal winter correction in vegetable prices augur well for food inflation, although volatility in commodity prices and weather anomalies remain potential upside risks to the overall inflation outlook, the study said. Robust kharif production, better rabi sowing coupled with higher reservoir levels and seasonal winter correction in vegetable prices augur well for food inflation, although volatility in commodity prices and weather anomalies remain potential upside risks to the overall inflation outlook, it said.

Kangana Ranaut's cringe-worthy film is vain, vapid, and worryingly irresponsible



It isn't uncommon for actors to direct themselves, but few could be as self-obsessed as Kangana Ranaut. After usurping control of Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi and giving herself a co-director credit for it, Ranaut made her solo directorial debut with the rather controversial Indira Gandhi biopic Emergency — a movie that was held up by the Central Board of Film Certification for several months, but should've been blocked from release on artistic grounds alone. Emergency is an unpleasant experience that gives the term 'vanity project' a whole new meaning. It could be argued that Bradley Cooper is suffering from a similar complex over in Hollywood. Having been nominated 12 times already, Cooper will do whatever it takes to win his first Oscar. His two directorial projects — A Star is Born and Maestro — were designed purely to showcase his considerable talents as both a performer and filmmaker. But Cooper can be excused for taking himself seriously, because he has the talent to back his braggadocio up. Emergency, on the other hand, is a sorry excuse of a movie that has the production values of a Kapil Sharma sketch and a central performance bordering on caricature.

For starters, one look at Ranaut's fake nose will send you spiralling into conspiracy theory mode. Did she send one of her siblings to Australia, have them infiltrate the Furiosa set, and steal prosthetics meant for Chris Hemsworth's lunatic villain Dementus? It's possible. So cartoonish is this nose that it would be considered a hate crime were this movie released in post-war America. It's distracting to look at, but more problematically, its mere existence coats every scene that Ranaut is in with a layer of unintentional comedy. And not only is she in virtually every scene, she insists on framing herself in tight close-ups, exposing not only the comical contours of her garish make-up, but also her limited range as a performer.

Speaking of post-war America, perhaps the one scene that encapsulates Emergency's flaws is the one in which she has a meeting with Richard Nixon in the Oval Office. Forget finding a nicely tailored suit for the man playing the President — in many ways, his legacy is as worrying as Indira's — the costume department couldn't even be bothered to tuck his shirt in for the scene. Filmed in a simple shot-reverse-shot, the scene appears to have been impor-

tant for Ranaut. She breaks out every weapon in her arsenal — facial ticks, head-bobbing, rapid batting of the eyes. Her voice, which appears to change every few minutes, is particularly exaggerated as she engages Nixon in a battle of egos. But there's little psychological insight on offer. Emergency would have you believe that the only reason why she plunged India into the Bangladesh conflict was because Nixon kept her waiting at the White House. In Emergency, we don't actually watch Operation Blue Star unfold. We watch Indira as she watches Operation Blue Star unfold. On television. Like Christopher Nolan did with Oppenheimer, Ranaut could make the argument that we are witnessing Indian history through Indira's eyes. "India is Indira, and Indira is India," she declares with the self-satisfaction of a baby who has just swallowed their first-ever bite of pizza. But while Nolan had a valid point — after all, Oppenheimer was presented almost exclusively through its protagonist's perspective — Ranaut can't make the same excuse, because several scenes in Emergency focus on the opposition, led by JP Narayan and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

But despite getting an entire musical sequence to themselves — the characters break into song as the Indian Army destroys Pakistani forces — folks like JP, Vajpayee, and Sam Maneckshaw are given a step-motherly treatment by Ranaut and her writer, Ritesh Shah. Speaking of which, even Sanjay Gandhi, who is projected like Joffrey Baratheon from Game of Thrones, gets only a handful of scenes. Each of them, minus the one in which he's painting the town red with Sara Ali Khan's actual grandmother, involves Indira. The only conclusion that you can realistically come to is that Ranaut wants the spotlight to be on her, and nobody else.

By allowing herself to be bogged down by the superficiality of it all — the voice, the tilt of the head, the constant blinking — she neglects to investigate who Indira was as a person. And by virtue of Indira being the martyr protagonist of the film, pitted against clearly defined villains and being blessed with a redemption arc, it appears that Ranaut has a soft corner for her subject. Or, at least, a soft corner for the idea of authoritarianism. Sometimes, the movie suggests, a leader who rules with an iron fist is just what people need. It's for their own good. These are irresponsible, even dangerous ideas. It's like Ranaut watched Vikramaditya Motwane's unreleased Indira documentary and learned all the wrong lessons from it. But you're barely able to shake your fist at your screen because of how ineptly put together Emergency is. It's a fallacy that Ranaut is a good actor. She struggles to maintain a uniform vocal texture throughout the film. In one scene, she's speaking in an exaggerated, high-pitched voice. In another, she's sounding like she's on Koffee with Karan, discussing nepotism. The movie covers decades in Indira's life, but Ranaut's physical performance doesn't change. There's a difference in how a 20-year-old carries themselves, versus how a 60-year-old would. Dissatisfying as Maestro was, Cooper made sure that Leonard Bernstein walked, talked, and behaved in an age-appropriate manner. More importantly, he didn't let a prosthetic nose get in the way of storytelling.

Gaurav Khanna recalls his struggling days in Mumbai, owned only one pan: 'I would get it welded when it broke'



Actor Gaurav Khanna, popularly known for his role as Anuj in the daily show Anupamaa, has been on the stage of Celebrity Masterchef after quitting the Rupali Ganguly show. While his initial stint on the cooking-based reality show wasn't great, Gaurav has emerged as one of the strongest contenders in the Celebrity Masterchef kitchen. As per reports, he is likely to emerge as the winner of the show judged by Farah Khan, and chefs Ranveer

Brar and Vikas Khanna. In the latest episode of Masterchef, Gaurav reminisced about his financial struggles in the city during the one-pot cooking challenge.

On the latest episode of Celebrity Masterchef, the competition was amped up with the contestants asked to cook an entire dish with four elements, using just one utensil. So at every step of preparation, the contestants would have to wash and reuse the same utensil and make one complete dish. While the celebrity cooks began the challenge with this limitation, Gaurav was seen getting nostalgic about his past. Talking to Chef Ranveer, Gaurav revisited his old days in Mumbai and said, "Today we got only one pot, and I remember the old days when I was new to Mumbai. I was a bachelor in college and I didn't have a lot of money. Either I could get petrol filled in my bike or buy utensils. I used to have a pan just like this, and I made food in that one pan, talking to my mom on call. I got the same feeling today." He also shared how when the pan broke he would get it welded or tie it with an aluminum string. Gaurav also joked, "I used to make horrible food in those days." Initially, Gaurav's journey on the show started on a bumpy note. After being heavily criticized for his first few dishes on the show, Gaurav emerged as a strong contender in the game. He has made it to the finals of the show and as per reports, Gaurav has also won the Celebrity Masterchef title.

Salman Khan hosts Sikandar special screening for family and friends; Salim Khan arrives with wife Salma.

Salman Khan organized a special screening of his upcoming film Sikandar for his family and close friends on Wednesday night. The actor was spotted arriving at the venue, followed by his family members, including his father, veteran writer Salim Khan, and mother, Salma Khan. Sikandar's director, AR Murugadoss, was also seen attending the screening. Salman arrived at the event with his security entourage, keeping his look casual in a black shirt and jeans. Before heading inside, he took a moment to pose for the paparazzi. Videos of Salim Khan arriving for the screening are now going viral on social media.

Salman's brother, Arbaaz Khan, was also present, accompanied by his wife, Sshura Khan. Arbaaz's son, Arhaan Khan—who he shares with his ex-wife, Malaika Arora—was also seen at the event. Salman's sisters, Arpita Khan Sharma and Alvira Khan Agnihotri, attended the screening with their respective families.

As fans eagerly await the release of Sikandar, filmmaker AR Murugadoss, best known for directing Aamir Khan's Ghajini, opened up about the film's unexpected emotional core, which he believes will resonate deeply with audiences. Speaking to The Times of India, he shared that while Sikandar is a high-octane mass entertainer, it carries



an emotional depth similar to Ghajini, particularly through its focus on a husband-wife relationship. "It explores how families function today, how couples treat each other, and what we might be missing in our relationships. That will be the highlight of the film," Murugadoss explained. He further noted that just as Ghajini was initially perceived as a psychological thriller but ultimately won audiences over with its poignant love story between Aamir Khan and Asin.

7 iconic moments from Mohanlal and Prithviraj Sukumaran's Lucifer that redefined on-screen mass appeal



With a week remaining for the release of actor Prithviraj Sukumaran's third directorial venture, the highly anticipated Mohanlal-starrer L2: Empuraan, expectations are at an all-time high, especially since the film serves as the second instalment in a planned trilogy that began with Lucifer (2019). Penned by Murali Gopy, Lucifer not only became one of the most successful Malayalam films in recent years but also redefined the mass entertainer formula. Besides deviating significantly from conventional templates and aesthetics found in movies focused on fan service, it also offered a narrative deeply rooted in Kerala's socio-political landscape, presented in an international cinematic style. As Empuraan expands the franchise on a much grander scale, the excitement surrounding the film largely stems from how the Prithviraj-Mohanlal-Murali trio shaped Lucifer, delivering an experience unlike any before. As the movie gears up for a re-release on March 20, a week before Empuraan's premiere, here's a look at the top moments from Lucifer that set new benchmarks for on-screen mass appeal.

After 30 minutes of skilful cross-cutting that offered glimpses into nearly all major characters, their motivations and what's at stake for them — elements that will be explored in greater depth as the film progresses — Lucifer introduces its protagonist Stephen Nedumpally (Mohanlal) in an understated manner. Unlike conventional mass entertainers, Prithviraj and Murali refrain from giving Mohanlal a grand star entrance. Instead, they focus on the actor in him, first revealing only his eyes and face, which hold a multitude of emotions, carefully concealed beneath an impassive exterior. While Govardhan (Indrajith Sukumaran) provides fragments of Stephen's past, the picture he paints is far from heroic. In fact, rather than glorifying him, Govardhan — who is no court bard here — almost casts him in an antagonistic light. It is after all this that Stephen makes his grand entrance, in his black Hindustan Landmaster bearing the number of the beast, 666, to pay his last respects to his 'godfather' PK Ramdas. Even here, Prithviraj and Murali do not offer, nor does Mohanlal demand, the kind of over-the-top intro to Stephen common in pan-Indian films, where a star asserts his dominance in a spectacular action sequence. Instead, the scene simply highlights the fact that he is a crowd-puller, in accordance with the film's narrative. And thanks to the meticulous build-up, the moment lands perfectly.

One of the most effective (and easiest) ways to elevate a hero and emphasise his authority is by making him deliver long, fiery and grandiose dialogues. This effect is often reinforced through catchphrases or punchlines like Allu Arjun's "Thaggede Le" from the Pushpa films or Mohanlal's own "Po Mone Dinesha" from Narasimham (2000).

However, in Lucifer, Stephen is not just a no-nonsense man but also someone who speaks in a measured, deliberate manner. He neither rambles nor delivers lengthy monologues to make a point. As a result, every word he utters carries far more weight than anyone else's, further enhanced by Mohanlal's expertise in dialogue delivery. In their first face-to-face confrontation, Stephen subtly warns the main antagonist Bimal Nair alias Bobby (Vivek Oberoi) that he will not tolerate drug trafficking under the protective umbrella of their party IUF, delivering sharp lines like "Narcotics is a dirty business" and "Who's there to save you [from me]?" But more than just a warning, Stephen also makes it clear what kind of rival Bobby is about to face. "The battle is not between good and evil, but evil and evil", he states, fully embodying his Lucifer persona. This stands in stark contrast to conventional protagonists, depicted as unquestionably righteous yet possessing an unhinged nature and overwhelming physical strength.

Not only is the action sequence set against the high-energy track "Kadavule Pole" expertly choreographed and

shot but also captures several signature elements that make Mohanlal beloved to fans, from his iconic moustache twirl to his dhoti tuck-up style. Beyond that, it too has redefined the way mass appeal is handled in cinema. In most Indian commercial films, the hero fights his enemies in front of a crowd, almost as if performing for the audience — establishing his dominance and making it clear that he is a force to be reckoned with. But Stephen operates differently. While he efficiently eliminates his enemies, he also ensures that no trace of his actions is left behind. Not just that he has no interest in proving his strength to others, but he deliberately keeps it hidden, well aware that revealing it would bring no benefit. This same approach is evident in the jail fight sequence, where the entire scene unfolds behind closed doors, never spilling into the public eye.

As Empuraan expands the franchise on a much grander scale, the excitement surrounding the film largely stems from how the Prithviraj-Mohanlal-Murali trio shaped Lucifer. Mohanlal with actor-director Prithviraj Sukumaran, writer Murali Gopy and producer Anithy Perumbavoor. (Credit: Facebook/@LuciferOfficialMovie)

Not 'Enakku innoru per irukku', but 'Ente pillere thoduvoda?!' By the time Stephen is arrested for a crime he didn't commit, one might expect him to have a dramatic "Enakku innoru per irukku (I have another name)" moment, revealing his true identity. But he doesn't resort to such theatrics. Instead, in a defining moment that offers a chilling glimpse into his true nature, we see Stephen shed all pretence and transform into the ruthless, cold-blooded mafia boss Khureshi Ab'ram he is for a few seconds. When Mayilvaahanam IPS (John Vijay) strikes him during his arrest, Stephen's face hardens and his eyes flash with raw ruthlessness and an unmistakable thirst for blood. What makes this moment even more powerful is its trigger: Mayilvaahanam hit Stephen when he reacted to the officer manhandling the children at the destitute home the latter runs. "Ente pillere thoduvoda?! (You dare touch my kids?!)" Stephen roars, pinning a standing Mayilvaahanam by the neck with his leg. As the other cops pull him away, Mayilvaahanam seizes the moment to deliver a blow. But Stephen's reaction — a cold, piercing gaze — unsettles all, including the audience. Not only is the action sequence set against the high-energy track "Kadavule Pole" expertly choreographed and shot but also captures several signature elements that make Mohanlal beloved to fans, from his iconic moustache twirl to his dhoti tuck-up style. Mohanlal in actor-director Prithviraj Sukumaran's Lucifer. After realising that Bobby is not the man she thought he was, Priyadarshini (Manju Warrier) recalls her father PKR's words — when all doors close, the only person she will have left to turn to is Stephen, whom she had hated all her life due to certain misunderstandings. At this crucial moment, Stephen takes her to the cemetery of an abandoned church, where his mother is buried. However, instead of immediately offering his help, he first shares his story, giving Priyadarshini a chance to see that he is not the enemy she had always believed him to be. Even here, the makers refrain from portraying Stephen as a bigger person and he remains a flawed man. Yet, strikingly, we see a desperate Priyadarshini seeking help from Lucifer and that too inside a church. No killing spree. Unlike pan-Indian heroes, Stephen, after proving his innocence, doesn't unleash a wave of vengeance against those who schemed against him; nor does he go on a murder spree. Given that he is Khureshi Ab'ram, he could have, but he chooses not to. Instead, he moves with calculated precision, handling the situation like a true mafia boss. Rather than resorting to mindless violence, he ensures that power is rightfully restored to his 'siblings' Priyadarshini and Jathin (Tovino Thomas). Through a masterful display of strategy, Stephen also systematically exposes Bobby's illegal operations, ultimately stripping him of all power. Lucifer delivered an experience unlike any before to viewers. Lucifer is gearing up for a re-release on March 20, a week before Empuraan's premiere. Even in the climax, when the makers could have easily given Mohanlal another action-packed sequence, Prithviraj and Murali Gopy exercise restraint, ensuring the established tone of the movie remains intact. With Stephen's men already surrounding Bobby, a fight between the two would have felt unnecessary and out of place. Recognising this, the makers opt for something far more chilling — Stephen, or rather Khureshi, delivers the infamous Ezekiel 25:17 passage from the Old Testament of the Bible. And thus, just before executing Bobby, Stephen asserts his dominance, proclaiming himself as "the only Lord". It is also only right before the credits that his true identity as Khureshi Ab'ram is fully revealed to the audience, brilliantly setting the stage for a sequel. With this, the makers also give Lucifer a satisfying conclusion of its own, thus making it appear complete; unharmed even if a sequel never materialises — something many pan-Indian films fail to do these days.

Dhanashree Verma to receive Rs 4.75 crore in alimony from Yuzvendra Chahal, family court directed to finalise divorce before IPL

Dhanashree Verma and cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal, who have been separated for over two years now, might get a decision on their divorce on Thursday as the Bombay High Court has directed the family court to decide on their divorce petition, as per a report by Bar and Bench. The Court said that since Chahal might not be available from March 21 because of his IPL commitments, the family court must decide on the petition by March 20. Dhanashree and Yuzvendra's mediation was finalised with terms for alimony that required him to pay Rs 4.75 crore. When they filed for divorce in February 2024, they filed a joint petition and chose to waive off the six month cooling-off period but the family court denied that request because Yuzvendra had paid only Rs 2.37 crore out of the agreed amount. The High Court however, has noted that Yuzvendra has complied as the second instalment of the alimony would be paid after the divorce decree. Dhanashree and Yuzvendra got married in December 2020. When rumours of their separation started in January 2024, Dhanashree took to her social media and shared a note saying that the stories being shared online were "baseless." She also alleged that "faceless trolls" were ruining her reputation. "The past few days have been incredibly tough for my family and me. What's



truly upsetting is the baseless writing, devoid of fact-checking, and the character assassination of my reputation by faceless trolls spreading hate. I've worked hard for years to build my name and integrity," she wrote and added, "My silence is not a sign of weakness; but of strength. While negativity spreads easily online, it takes courage and compassion to uplift others."